



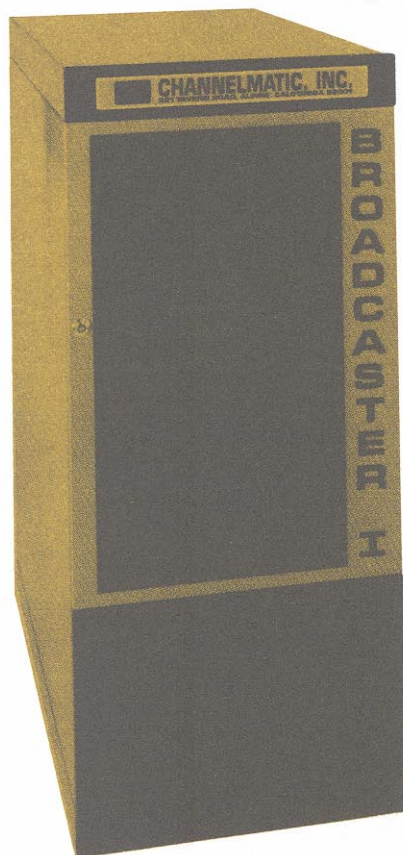
# CTR

## Community Television Review

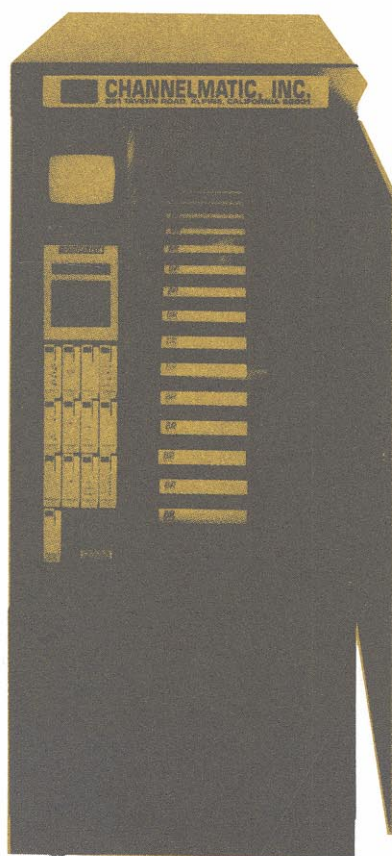
Volume 9, No.3  
1986  
\$3.00

# MAKING COMMUNITY TV





Patents Pending



## Automatic Videocassette Changer

### FEATURES

- Random access of up to 15 videocassettes
- Total microcomputer control
- Easy programming—display prompted in English
- Full 7-day programming (100 events per day)
- No VCR modification required
- Computerized stepper motor drive—indexing accuracy within .005 inch
- Reliable... no oil, no belts, no gears, no chains
- Minimal moving parts for ultra long service life
- Units may be cascaded for additional capacity
- Will play multiple-sequential segments on each tape
- Built-in vertical interval switching
- Automatic switching to auxiliary source during cassette change
- Automatic record and delayed playback optional
- Built-in video monitoring optional
- Optional electronic modules can add numerous features

**Only \$13,500, from stock!**

The BROADCASTER I™ is a revolutionary new videocassette changer system which can random access amongst up to fifteen videocassettes. It is designed to be used in broadcast stations, CATV systems, LPTV systems, hospitals, schools, hotels and other facilities where quality programming must be originated automatically on a pre-programmed weekly time schedule. The unit is field proven, operating in numerous television installations around the world.

The microcomputer in the BROADCASTER I can be operator programmed to select any one of fifteen standard 3/4-inch videocassettes from the integral tape storage magazine, insert it into an unmodified Sony Type-5 VCR, playback the tape and then replace it in its designated slot. Provisions are included for precisely prerolling the VCR and audio/video switching is accomplished in a broadcast fashion, with vertical-interval switching as referenced to the primary program source.

The BROADCASTER I may be operator programmed to rewind a videocassette immediately after it has played or to delay tape rewinding until a specific time, such as midnight, when each tape which has been played will be inserted into the VCR, rewound and replaced in the magazine. All tape rewinding is totally automatic and requires no operator attention.

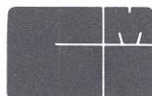
For systems requiring additional programming capacity, two or more BROADCASTER I changers can be easily cascaded to achieve the desired results. The unit can also be optionally configured to control one or more external VCR's in a sequential mode, providing an excellent unattended program facility. It also has the optional capability of controlling one or more PATCHMASTER™ 10 x 1 audio/video switchers on a time schedule for automatic switching of external video and audio signals.

Unlike previous videocassette changers, the BROADCASTER I utilizes a very simple and accurate tape handling mechanism. The primary drive and positioning mechanism incorporates highly-precise and ultra-reliable computerized stepper motor drive components with indexing within five 1/1000 of an inch. The use of a minimum number of moving parts and conservatively rated drive components assures long-term reliability.

If you haven't seen Channelmatic's full line of professional audio/video distribution equipment and automation accessories, give us a call today and we'll send you our full 100-page catalog.

*You'll like what you see.*

*The leader in VCR automation*



**CHANNELMATIC, INC.™**

821 Tavern Road  
Alpine, CA 92001  
(619) 445-2691 Toll Free: (800) 231-1618



The Community Television Review is published quarterly by the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers. Send subscriptions, memberships, and inquiries to NFLCP, 906 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. Subscriptions come with membership in the NFLCP: Community Associate/Student \$35/year, Professional \$50/year, Patron \$100/year, Non-profit organizations \$90/year, For-profit organizations \$150/year. A subscription can be obtained separately for \$12/year for individuals, \$20/year for libraries, or \$30/year for organizations. Address advertising inquiries to Community Television Review, P.O. Box 161617, Sacramento, CA 95816, (916) 441-1566. *Contents Copyright* © 1986 by the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, Inc. — Non-profit tax exempt organizations may reprint items from the CTR (with exception of materials copyrighted by others), provided they credit CTR and notify the NFLCP of the reprinting. All others must obtain advance written permission.

**Managing Editor:**  
Dave Bloch

**Editorial Board:**  
Susan Bednarczyk, Trisha Dair, Jean Rice, Bill Rushton, George Stoney, Stee Israelsky, Margie Nicholson

**Design & Layout:**  
GMW Communications

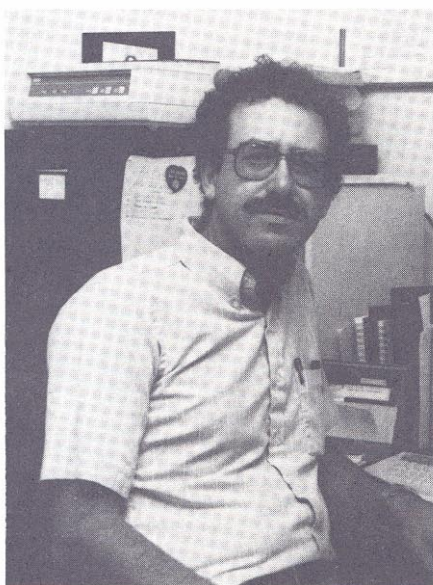
#### NFLCP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jan Leshner, *Chairperson*, Trisha Dair, *Treasurer*, Alex Quinn, *Treasurer*, Sharon Ingraham, *Secretary*, Frank Jamison, Martha Schmidt, Dirk Koning, Fred Johnson, Steve Israelsky, Rika Welsh, Susan Adams Lloyd, Chuck Sherwood, Alan Bushong, Joe Van Eaton, Tom Volgy, Nevada Hudson, Cliff Hall, Rose Rumney, Venita Peyton, Gail Copen, Jan Sanders, Ricardo Rodriguez, Tom Karwin, Jewell Ryan-White.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter From The Managing Editor	4
Building A Volunteer Crew	6
? The Art Of Quarterbacking	8
✓ Program Formats	9
Channel L Working Group Continues 'Video Spectrum'	9
Doing A Site Survey	10
How Much Juice?	11
✓ The Truth About Video Sound	12
✓ X Marks The Spot	14
How To Make A Video Tape	15
✓ Getting Together A Set	16
Table of Construction Materials	19
The Learning Channel Schedule	20
Unraveling The Editing Process	22
Quiet On The Set... Live In 30 Seconds	24
Cablecasting The Council	26
How Portland Makes Money In Commercial Production	29
✓ What's Your PQ?	30
Where Silicon Meets Vidicon	32
✓ Access Challenges The Structure of Television	34
Classifieds	35
NFLCP Honors Hometown Winners	36
Cable Consciousness Raising For The Judiciary	38

# Letter From The Managing Editor



by Dave Bloch

This is my first crack at writing the editor's letter in *CTR*, and I've been saving it for last. All the articles are in, they have all been edited and are safely recorded on a floppy disk, ready to be typeset. Former Managing Editor and mentor Paul d'Ari is hitting the lawbooks at the University of Maryland, but I can see him, about a month from now, looking over this issue and — Oh, No! — finding a typo.

As a new editor, creating *CTR* in a new location, it will be my task to keep the magazine's content and appearance at the high level of quality brought to it by Paul. Our new production house, Sacramento's GMW Communications, has considerable experience at publishing and, as a bonus, is very familiar with video production and public access. The people at GMW

have already been a tremendous help in helping me through the processes of putting together this first issue.

So, what is *Making Community TV* all about? It's about getting together volunteer production teams who will stay together for a long time. It's about training those volunteers and getting them to critique their work. It's about some of the different aspects of production — planning, audio, lighting, and set design. It's about doing live production and production for local origination. And it's about access itself, why the fact that volunteers put hours and hours of spare time into making public access cable television programs is of such profound importance to our society.

The community programmers who wrote this issue work in very different environments. As you read about their work, look for those particular ideas or suggestions that can have a positive impact on your productions — right now, today. Then, grab that idea and put it to work — today. That's how great things get done!

*Dave*

## NEW NFLCP PUBLICATIONS AND TAPES ORDER NOW!

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copyright and You              | \$4.50           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cable Policy        | \$23.00          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1985 Hometown USA Bicycle Tour | \$120.00         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hometown USA Sampler           | \$60.00/\$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Programming Showcase | \$40.00/\$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After The Act                  | \$40.00/\$100.00 |

Enclosed find \$\_\_\_\_\_ which includes the cost of the books or videotapes and handling charge.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

National Federation of Local Cable Programmers  
906 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20003  
(202) 544-7272

**Copyright and You** — A primer on copyright and fair use issues for users of local cable channels. This 16-page handbook, which is the only one of its kind, will present you with the practical considerations for using excerpts of existing copyrighted works.

Prices: \$4.50 (1-10 copies)  
(11-50 copies)  
(over 50 copies)

**Cable Policy Packet** — This educational packet presents vital information on the policy issues that confront local government officials and cable programmers. The articles and documents in this packet put a particular emphasis on the implications of the new cable law.

**1986 Hometown USA Bicycle Tour** — This three-hour videotape presents some of the best local programs that cable has to offer. All of the 13 programs were winners in the 1986 Hometown USA Video festival.

Ten-day Rental: \$126.00

**Municipal Programming Showcase** — This new 30-minute videotape contains numerous examples of municipal programming at its best.

Purchase: \$100.00 Seven-day rental: \$40.00

**After The Act** — this 30-minute program examines the impact of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984. It includes interviews with Sue Miller Buske, executive director of NFLCP, Joe Van Eaton, with the law firm of Spiegel and McDiarmid; Michael Meyerson, associate professor at the University of Baltimore; Nick Miller, with the law firm of Miller and Young; and George Stoney, professor of film and video at New York University.

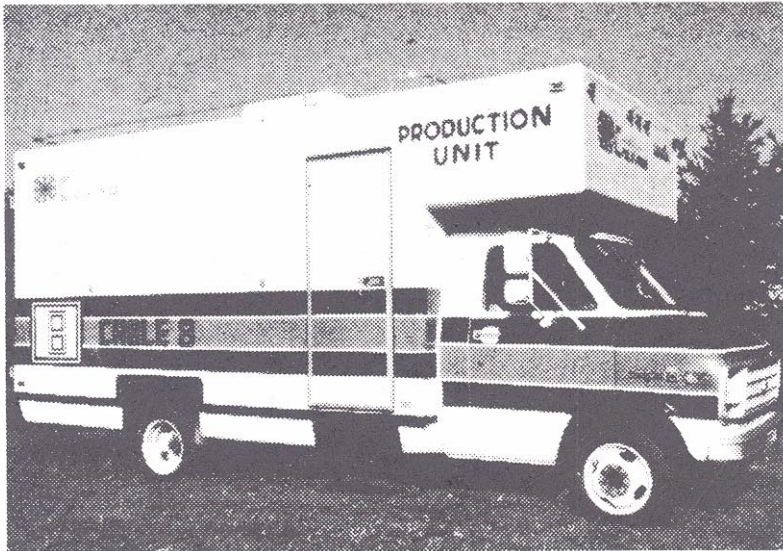
Purchase: \$100.00 Seven-day rental: \$40.00



# JIMMY REA

**If You Have Just Received Funding For a New Equipment Package, Why Not Consider a Production Truck?**

High Quality Production, Large Impressive Appearance, Price!  
Our Solution: 1 Chevrolet 14' Cube Van Including:

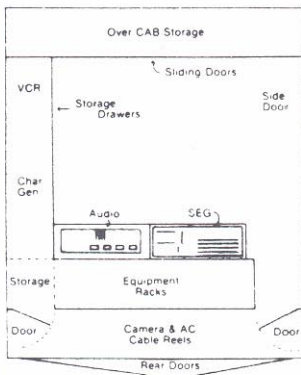


- Delivery in 30 days.

Having built trucks for many needs, we can provide a tremendous amount of information on mobile production studio design, construction and maintenance.

All of our truck quotations include delivery with full instructions to operating personnel.

Representing over 300 lines of video hardware, we are available to discuss substitutions in every area from cameras to truck chassis.



Sony and Panasonic production packages installed in our high cube unit complete:

**\$59,900**

Basic Units Starting At \$36,000

## WE ALSO CUSTOM BUILD!!!

All You Provide is:

- Description of your individual needs
- Budget limitation

We Provide Internally:

- Technical work and engineering
- Carpentry and materials
- Complete installation consisting of high quality custom construction satisfying all your personal needs.



**Our sales representatives will be very happy to call on your office with complete blueprints of the trucks described in our offer. Your individual needs can then be fully discussed and if changes are required, pricing affected by those requirements can be completely discussed.**

Call or Write for our Free Truck Information Package:

# JIMMY REA

Fred Gerling  
540 West Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
(614) 221-5170



## Building A Volunteer Crew

By Peggy M. Gilbertson

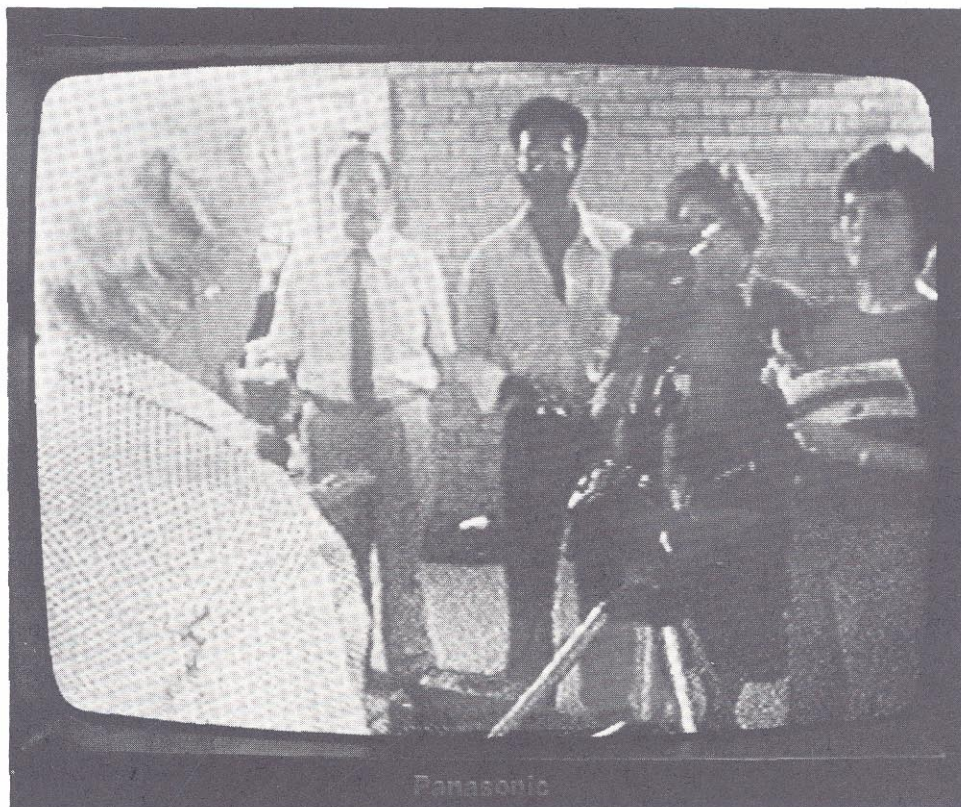
If you have struggled to recruit a crew of trained volunteers, you already know the hard way to build a production team.

There is, however, a hassle-free, adaptable plan that assists a producer in forming a group which can maintain a regular production schedule. The 25 crews currently active at Channel 20 Community Television of Knoxville, Tennessee, attest to the success of this producer-centered method. In addition, it encourages long-term commitment. Eighty percent of our two hundred volunteers have at least a year's experience, and some have been participating since the late 1970's.

Durable, active volunteer crews evolve naturally. They cannot be artificially created. When Channel 20 was founded in 1975, no one expected that in two years the excitement of the new project would fade. The number of people and new programs declined steadily despite well-attended, open-to-the-public workshops taught by University of Tennessee professors and high school vocational teachers. But the academic approach, which was successful in preparing individual professionals, did not provide the volunteer producer with the team needed to move into production. As the workshop ended, the trainees discovered that the time schedules and program goals of this heterogeneous group could not be reconciled. The eager, but frustrated, producers turned to an overworked 3-person staff to supply a crew or serve as one.

With the objective of recruiting more volunteers and producing more programs, the basic workshop for in-studio production was redesigned to attract a group of like-minded volunteers with good ideas and to effectively use the limited time they could spare to making a television program on a regular basis.

The producer is the key to making this approach work. There is always someone contacting Channel 20 or any community station with a program idea. Now, instead of being enrolled in an open training class, this soon-to-be producer is asked to find five to ten friends or co-workers who would be interested in learning the skills to



*A video crew from Holland visited Channel 20 and made this tape of a Knoxville access workshop.*

make a television show. Generally, he or she finds this task surprisingly easy. Plans are then made for a mutually-convenient time to hold the workshop. This same time slot will be used later for regular production. The group understands that it will take about six hours per month to produce a weekly show.

Even before the first workshop class, the crucial elements are in place to create a production team bonded by friendship, a common interest, a shared goal, a specific commitment of time, and a leader who brought the group together. No effort is made at this time to define or assign roles for the participants in the workshop. During the four three-hour sessions of the training course, individuals will naturally gravitate to those jobs on the production team which they find most personally interesting. For the moment, the group has

only an acknowledged Producer — the person who first conceived the idea of producing a show and brought them all together.

Each workshop is tailored to the production needs of the crew. Gone is the jargon, esoteric theory, and intimidating mystique which can make a new volunteer feel a stranger in a strange land. In this supportive "can-do" environment, the volunteers find that learning production skills is exciting, creative, challenging and fun. Success experiences are built into the workshop to prove to the volunteers that they really can create a television program.

One such experience is the five-minute mini-production, shot at the close of the first workshop session. The volunteers are surprised at how quickly they learned to operate the equipment. They are pleased



by the picture quality as they review and critique the tape.

The mini-productions taped throughout the course afford an opportunity to experiment with lights, set, music and talent for the first program in their series. All of these impromptu productions have a beginning, middle, and end to teach the concept of program unity.

Since management's purpose is to create crews which can and will function independently, the staff instructor begins to withdraw as the group matures. The producer assumes more responsibility, understanding that his or her role is to bring all the component parts together and get the job done.

The producer and crew have one last hurdle — the transition from practice sessions to the real thing. Management recognizes that it is essential for the first production to be done when the team's experience is fresh and the confidence is high. The deadline for the first show is the week following the workshop.

Non-profit organizations fit easily into this concept of training and production management. When a potential producer from a non-profit organization approaches Channel 20 about a possible program series, they are told to recruit a crew from within the organization for a workshop. At first, the producer may seem daunted with the task of trying to recruit his own crew, but usually within one to two weeks, he or she will return with a list of participants.

Currently at Channel 20, agencies use their staff and board members for such program series as "Shaping Up Knoxville" (YMCA), "Sexual Assault Awareness" (Rape Crisis Center), "The Divorce Process" (Child and Family Services), and "Arts Calendar" (Knoxville Arts Council). Other series are produced by professional organizations, the Fire Department, League of Women Voters, and the Knoxville Bar Association.

Recently, Channel 20 responded to a request from a community agency to help with the rehabilitation of recovering teenage addicts. To date, the Channel 20 staff has taught TV skills to eighteen of these young people, who have produced thirteen shows.

If an organization is too small to field a crew or is not interested in producing a regular series, there are still ways to involve them in community access. At Channel 20, producer Penny Zibula

invites representatives to be guests on her talk show, "Potpourri." Penny, who is blind, has made over 200 programs in this series over the past seven years.

Easy access means more vital, diverse access. Effective, time-efficient production opens the door to greater participation by the non-profit organization professionals and volunteers who can enhance the community orientation of the station. The relationship between management, producer and crew is the key to making easy access work. It is a great circle: management needs the producers and their program ideas; the producers need the willing commitment of the volunteer crew to actually make the programs; and both the producers and crews need effective and efficient training from the community access management and staff if their particular story is to be told. The result of working effectively within that circle is a wealth of community programming produced by committed, excited volunteers.

*Peggy M. Gilbertson is General Manager of Channel 20 Community Television of Knoxville, Tennessee.*



*Another scene from the same program.*



# The Art Of Quarterbacking *& Idea?*

By Anne Appert Landers

"Monday Night Quarterbacking" was an idea whose time had come; it was also someone else's idea. Valley Cable TV in Los Angeles, California had been teaching quarterbacking classes to their production interns for some time before we picked the idea up as a teaching tool in 1983.

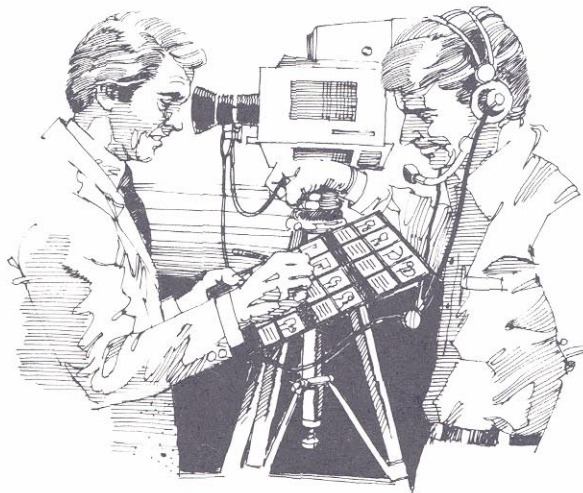
Quarterbacking sessions are an opportunity to go back, review and critique the performance of the previous week. Interns, producers, technical staff and invited professionals view programs produced during the week and offer suggestions for how the programs could be improved.

We began offering quarterbacking classes as a form of ongoing instruction for the producers and crews of series programs currently in production. At Prime Cable Community Channel 12, producers move into studio production after their first series of community television classes. They have strong basic skills, but they are still learning.

"Monday Night Quarterbacking" was first offered to these video "beginners." The classes were taught by staff; they reviewed segments of each program that had been taped that week, with the interns and producers offering comments and asking questions. The spirit of criticism was always positive since everyone in the group was involved in one or another of the programs being discussed.

Soon, the more advanced programmers were asking for the opportunity to present their programs to the group. Even the producers of programs still in production wanted the input that the group provided.

After several months, the staff found that the group was critiquing programs in the same series several times, and they began to feel that they were not offering new insights to the producers. It was suggested that professionals from the local video community might be interested in teaching some of the sessions. This turned out to be an inspired idea. Lighting directors, unit producers, on-camera talent and even the television critic for the local newspaper were invited to teach the classes. Often, the guest quarterback



brought samples of his or her own work to show the group.

The community producers really enjoyed knowing professionals in the video field. Occasionally, a guest quarterback would become interested in a particular access program and extend their involvement with that program. In addition to inviting "TV people" to quarterback, we also invited the sales manager of the cable company to talk to the group about the response of cable subscribers to community television, the cable system manager spoke about the role of community television from his perspective, and the chairman of the cable TV advisory board offered his view from the regulatory side.

Eventually, the success of the quarterbacking classes demanded a change in their format. The classes had become so large that the studio was the only space large enough to accommodate the group. Because our facility is only available for community use five days a week, we were sacrificing badly needed production time.

The new structure offers quarterbacking classes at the end of each introductory access workshop. Quarterbacking by guest

professionals is still offered, but it only occurs monthly and the tapes to be quarterbacked are preselected by the Channel 12 staff.

So that we don't miss out on the social and networking aspects, we now offer a "Wrap Party" at the end of each of the four annual programming seasons. We look at outtakes and bloopers, and encourage the beginners to make plans for continued involvement. All of the volunteers who completed their commitment to their programs are given a Certificate of Appreciation.

"Monday Night Quarterbacking" has been an important addition to our teaching program. It has provided a kind of instruction and feedback that is essential to our community producers. It also provides a very valuable link with the local video community. As they say on TV, "Try It — You'll Like It!"

*Anne Appert Landers is the Director of Community Affairs for Prime Cable Channel 12 in Decatur, Georgia.*



# Program Formats

By Scott Bartlett

*7 Our S.B.?*

It might surprise you to realize how short the list of television formats is:

**Talking Heads  
Documentaries  
Dramatizations  
Visual Music.**

That's it — the whole list of available fare on television. Talking Heads include news and talk shows. Documentaries involve real people and Dramatizations involve actors. In between, you find a little Visual Music.

But what about sports? Sports is a *real-time* documentary. "Jacques Cousteau" is a *compressed-time* documentary. Remember, Format is defined not by *what* you present, but by *how* you present it.

Visual Music is the new kid on the block. Besides the MTV-style "music video," Visual Music encompasses any material whose primary structure is musical. The one-minute nature movie that ends every installment of "CBS Sunday Morning" is an excellent example. So are sequences in feature films that are cut to match a musical soundtrack — "Miami Vice" has taken this to its extreme, with obvious success.

Appealing to the majority of television viewers usually means sticking to a conventional format. Mimick a show that is successful and keep your production standards as high as the skills of your staff and limitations of your equipment will allow.

If, on the other hand, your intention is to attract a new crowd to your show, it may be wise to modify the structural aspect of the format itself.

## "Open Circuit" — Tinkering With Format

"Open Circuit" was a series recently produced at Tampa Cable Public Access as a training vehicle for interns coming from area schools and colleges. To achieve that goal, "Open Circuit" had to be labor intensive and as long as possible, with a minimum of production problems. We

chose the easiest of the formats, Talking Heads, and modified it to make the show unique.

This talk show was shot in the round with traveling cameras, which gave the student camera operators plenty to do. Several television conventions were discarded: there were no countdowns, no introductions, no commercial interruptions, and no expectations of perfection. The typical structure of verbal directions from the control room was discarded. Instead, the camera operators worked interpretively within a specified set of parameters, and the director selected shots as appropriate.

"Open Circuit" was three hours long, and ran every Wednesday night for three months. The round table would accommodate up to five people at one time, with

twelve guests, on the average, rotating through during the course of an evening.

Almost fifty staff and crew members were involved in "Open Circuit," constantly changing tasks and roles. Design input was encouraged from all the participants, and all ideas were tried. The show had a work-in-progress feeling, with everyone learning from mistakes.

The response to our "electronic salon?" Guests typically said "Open Circuit" was the most comfortable talk show they had ever visited. The absence of formality and countdowns, along with the friendly living-room atmosphere, is what relaxed them.

*Scott Bartlett is a Visiting Professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa.*

## Channel L Working Group Continues 'Video Spectrum'

By Susan Stone Shapiro

This November, New York City's *Channel L Working Group*, will be celebrating the second season of "Video Spectrum." The series, which premiered in January of this year, features the works of award-winning and emerging video artists from across the country.

"Video Spectrum" is a prize-winner itself, having received the "Innovative Programming" award at the 1986 Home-town USA Video Festival.

Last season, this unique series brought fifteen innovative and rarely seen video works to public attention (over 300,000 viewers) via cable television. The project was funded by the New York State Council on the Arts and the Media Bureau. The success of "Video Spectrum" has prompted both of these agencies to continue funding the series this programming season.

"Video Spectrum" will continue to present works which encompass a broad range of social, political and artistic points of view. This season will feature programs on the Native American's ability to endure in "End of the Race," Skip Blumberg's "Elephant Games" about the training of elephants in Thailand; a trip with New York's graffiti artists, and many more.

The series will be cablecast between Channel L Working Group's regular public affairs programs to ensure an engaging blend of programming for their cable audience.

Interested readers may contact CLWG at this address:

Susan Stone Shapiro  
Channel L Working Group, Inc.  
51 Chambers Street, Room 532  
New York, NY 10007  
(212) 964-2960



# Doing A Site Survey

By Vickie Cason

Whether your production involves a single camera shoot in a park or a mobile van with three cameras in a shopping mall, the site survey is one of your most important pre-production responsibilities.

## Clearances

You may think you can pack up a camera, recorder, battery pack and microphone and go shoot the activities of the birds and bees in a public park anytime you want without asking anybody. Wrong! You need clearances. And because a public park is under the jurisdiction of some government agency, it may take some time to get the clearances you need. Otherwise, the local police might drive up and ask you to leave just when you have your equipment set up, the light is just right and the birds and bees are giving their best performances of the day.

Clearances include permission to tape, permission of right of way and the right to tape people, places, objects, performances and other subjects of interest to television audiences.

It will be important to explain your production in detail to the owner or custodian of the location where you plan to videotape. The more they understand about what you are trying to do, the easier it will be for them to cooperate.

## Checking Out The Site

After you have obtained permission to shoot at your chosen location, you will need to know what time the building or area will be available on the day of your shoot. It is a good idea to get the phone numbers of the custodian, security and maintenance people who will be responsible for the site on the day of your production.

A technical site survey should be made to check out power sources and to identify lighting and audio requirements and potential problems.

**Power.** If you will have to plug in your equipment, you will need to find out where the AC outlets are located. This will be an important factor in determining

where you will set up. Although portable video equipment draws only small amounts of power, lighting instruments require several hundred watts. In fact, most home electrical circuits will not take more than two 650-watt lights; most businesses' circuits will handle three.

Since several AC wall outlets may be connected to a single circuit, you may want to take the actual lights along and plug them in to make sure the power is adequate.

Check if any of the outlets are wired to wall switches or dimmers—you may *not* connect video equipment to a dimmer-controlled AC outlet!

While you are checking the AC outlets, check to see if you will need grounding plug adapters. Estimate how much extension cord you will need, and plan to set up to avoid running cords across pedestrian traffic areas. (Cords and cables can be covered with gaffer's tape or small rubber floor mats.) Finally, avoid plugging in near air conditioners, refrigerators, elevators or any other electrical equipment that turns on and off intermittently.

**Lighting.** You will need to decide how many lights you will need and where they will be located. Make a note of ambient light sources and shiny surfaces and determine how you are going to avoid having them behind your subject.

**Audio** seems to be the biggest problem area in location production. To get the best sound possible, decide where to place your microphone(s) to get all of the sound you want while avoiding the ambient sound you don't want. Be aware of noisy air conditioning, traffic and other noises at the site. Estimate how much audio cable you will need, and whether a mixer will be necessary.

If you are plugging in to an audio system run by someone else, be sure that they understand what your audio needs are and that you have appropriate cables, adapters, and matching transformers for plugging into their system.

When planning to videotape a performance which requires you to rely on someone else's lighting and/or audio,

attend a dress rehearsal so that you will know what to expect.

To help you and your crew have a good understanding of the site and the setup you have planned, do an overhead drawing of the site showing the location of outlets, lights, cameras and microphones, and go over the drawing with crew members during your pre-production meeting.

## Mobile Van Productions

**Parking.** When doing a mobile van shoot, your site survey should include information about where the van will be parked. If you are parking on any platform that is not on solid ground, be sure that the platform can hold the weight of the van. Do not plan to park on grass or dirt unless you *know* that the surface will not be watered or rained on before your shoot, or you could find yourself up to your axles in mud.

If you will be parking inside a public building, you may be required to drain all but one gallon of gasoline from the tank beforehand; and any LP gas tanks may have to be empty as well. You will need to find out all the safety regulations for taking a van inside the building where your shoot is planned, and abide by them.

Finally, measure any doors or gates you will have to drive the van through, and make sure they will be unlocked early for your setup.

**Cable runs.** Virtually every piece of equipment that you will use during the van shoot will be connected to the van with a cable. You will need to determine the cable routings and distances from the van to the place where each camera, headset, audio monitor and any other equipment will be set up during the shoot.

Decide whether your power source will be the van's own AC generator (outside only!) or an AC plug-in. In addition to the information regarding power sources mentioned earlier, you will need to know the actual plug-in voltage and amperage ratings required by the van. Find out where the circuit breaker box for your power connection is located, and get an explanation of the breaker operation.



## Telephones

Special considerations in the site survey for an interactive production include telephone lines for call-ins, a system for letting the director and host know that a call is ready, and instructions to the viewing

audience about how to participate.

In order to get your phone lines in and tested in time for your production, call the phone company at least two months in advance and give the service representative a definite deadline for getting the lines in.

## Good Luck!

To make sure that your remote or live production goes smoothly, plan carefully, and give yourself more time than you think you will need to set up and do a run through before the actual production begins.

# How Much Juice?

By The Community Videot

Most residential electrical circuits have capacities of 15 Amps and most commercial building circuits can handle 20 Amps. What do these numbers mean, and how do you determine whether you will be able to plug your equipment into an outlet without overloading a circuit and blowing a fuse?

## 1. Read The Label.

Every piece of equipment you own has a small label on it somewhere that gives you its power requirements. It will look something like this:

120 VAC 60Hz 1.0A 120W

The first number is the required **Voltage**. Audio and video equipment built for use in the United States operate on 110 to 120 Volt Alternating Current (that's what "VAC" stands for).

The second number is the **Frequency**. This will always be 60 Hertz (which means 60 cycles per second). You will not need this number in your calculations.

The third number tells you how many **Ampères** (or "Amps" for short) are drawn by the piece of equipment. "1.0A" means the equipment draws 1.0 Amps of electrical current. *This number may not always be listed — you will learn how to calculate it below.*

The last number on the label above tells you how many **Watts** are used by the equipment. "120W" means the equipment consumes 120 Watts of power.

## 2. Calculate The Amperes.

You will have to find the total number of Amps for your equipment so you can compare it against the capacity of the circuit before you plug the equipment into the AC outlet.

Unfortunately, many pieces of equipment do not list the amperage. The labels will always show the Wattage and Voltage, however. These two numbers are all you need to calculate Amps.

The calculation is part of Ohm's Law, and is simply this:

$$\text{WATTS/VOLTS} = \text{AMPS}$$

So, suppose you have a video monitor with a label that looks like this:

120 VAC 60Hz 600W

To find out how many Amps it draws, just do this:

$$600 \text{ Watts} / 120 \text{ Volts} = 5 \text{ Amps}$$

That's all there is to it! Your monitor will draw 5 Amps when you plug it into a 120-Volt outlet.

## A Safe Shortcut.

If you have trouble dividing by 120 in your head, you can get a fast, conservative estimate of the amperage by just dividing

the Watts by 100. So, that 600-Watt monitor would consume approximately 6 Amps. This method gives you a little safety cushion, just in case someone else decides to plug in a public address system or other device to the same wall outlet.

## Now What?

Now you have the information you need to avoid plugging too many pieces of equipment into the same circuit. Add up the Amps for all the equipment you are planning to use.

Now, check with the owner, engineer or custodian of the building to determine the locations and capacities of the circuits.

If the total number of Amps for all your equipment is greater than the capacity of a single circuit, you will have to plug your equipment into two or more circuits.

If the total amperage is close to the circuit capacity (say, 10 Amps for a 15 Amp circuit), you should check the location carefully to see if any other electrical devices (appliances, for example) are also plugged in to that same circuit. Note that even outlets in different rooms might be on the same circuit.

If your total amperage is well under the circuit capacity, you should be able to plug everything into the same circuit without any problems.

So, read your equipment labels, calculate the amperages, add them up, and don't plug in more than each circuit can handle. Do that, and you should never suffer the embarrassment of Blowing The Fuse again!



# The Truth About Video Sound

By George Stoney *N.Y.U.*

I volunteered to write this article about the problems of getting good sound when one is producing with inexpensive video gear because I have so often been disappointed by the articles written by sound engineers who, it would appear, approach the subject from a purely theoretical viewpoint.

## Location, Location, Location

Sound engineers usually begin such a discussion by talking about microphones, which is Mistake Number One. The most important decision to make in ensuring good sound on a shoot is *not* the choice of microphone, but the choice of location. If you are planning to shoot in a noisy office then no matter how skilled your sound engineer, the general ambience of that noisy office will be a part of your final track.

All locations should be checked out for sound qualities ahead of time, preferably using a recorder and headphones so you can listen to the sound the way your equipment will record it. I take along my Walkman and a couple of microphones, the "Old Faithful" Electro-Voice 635A omnidirectional hand mike, and a Sony ECM-50 lapel clip-on. Listening with these tools will nearly always forewarn me about potential sound problems. Now I have time to schedule the shoot when the copy machine is not in use or when the windows can be closed.

Very often, I let the subject of my interview or the office manager whose cooperation I need actually listen with the headphones themselves. "My goodness," they will gasp. "I never heard such a racket!" Thus convinced, they are far more ready to make the adjustments these sound problems dictate.

Sometimes the sound check will dictate a change in location as the simplest solution: from the subject's real office to the library at the end of the hall, or from the front porch to the back garden. It is much easier to make rational decisions like this

ahead of time, instead of waiting until shooting day with its inherent pressure and confusion. Work with the people involved, explaining how and why the move will improve the quality of *their* recording, and allow them to suggest alternative choices.

This habit of letting people on the edge of things become a part of the action can be very helpful when one must persuade them to be quiet. I have put headphones on truck drivers and they have agreed to kill idling motors, and used the same technique on the streets of New York to convince the owners of loud tape players to cut their machines.

Even when you have no chance to make prior arrangements, sound ambience must not be forgotten. Remember that every bit of extraneous noise is going to be magnified several times as you edit. Be particularly skeptical when some technical wizard tries to reassure you that "it can all be cleaned up in the mix." I have spent a lot of time and money trying to clean up sound tracks, and the results have always been disappointing. Your original recording *must* be as clean as possible.

If you are taping interviews at a noisy party, make sure there is enough of that party showing in your video to let the audience know where the extra sound is coming from. Even then, move away from the clinking punch bowl and face away from the lobby where the hostess is shouting "helllos."

When recording material that you think may be used as a voiceover, the safe thing is to choose the quietest location possible. An interview by the sea, for example, will be beautiful with the image and sound of crashing waves in the background. But edit in other video, and the sound of the surf will seem ridiculous. In some cases, I have used one location for the on-camera material and another for the long stretches of talk (usually recorded only on audiotape) from which I expected to select sentences here and there. Once people are enjoying themselves talking with you and find that you are interested in what they are saying (not just in the sound quality of your

recording), they are happy to make accommodations.

## Microphone Placement

Mistake Number 2 is to give great attention to the quality of the microphones available and say little about how to *place* those microphones properly. I have come to accept microphones appearing within the frame as a fact of life. It is usually preferable to allow them to show if this will improve the quality of the recording.

It is interesting how accustomed many people have become at handling microphones. Handing a person the mike often gives him the confidence to speak, particularly if he tends to be shy or hesitant. It says, in effect, "I trust you."

In an informal group situation, I find it often works quite well to have people pass the hand microphone around. This gives better audio quality than placing one microphone in the center of the group. To eliminate the problem of hand noise as the mike is passed around, tape a piece of foam rubber around it, then check with headphones to be sure the foam is properly secured.

The lapel or lavalier microphone is the solution for so many sound problems that it is the microphone of choice for most interview situations. It minimizes background noise while being sensitive enough to pick up questions coming from the off-camera interviewer. Clip it about at the shoulder line, pointing towards the speaker's mouth. Hiding the mike under a tie or behind a lapel may make things look a bit neater, but often result in "clothes noise" or a boomy sound.

The highly directional shotgun microphone is *not* the solution to most location sound problems. Shotguns are inherently distorting and require skilled handling. While a shotgun mike will zero in on a sound coming from a long distance in front of it, there is no cutoff point beyond the source of your sound. So, while you are



picking up the foreman's voice you will also be recording, loud and clear, the sound of the stamping mill a hundred yards behind him. If you are not wearing headphones, you will not be aware of the problem until you play back the tape.

What about the camera's own internal microphone? Although usually highly sensitive, the camera mike will pick up best what is closest to it — you. Recently while using one on a new camera, I discovered the whirring sound of the motorized zoom was an annoying addition to the sound track. Limit the camera mike's use to crowded locations, like shooting in the middle of a parade or a mass demonstration, where dangling cables become a hazard and sound levels are high.

## The Price Of Progress

Time was you could take your reel-to-reel portapak to a repair shop and replace the weak mini-phone mike connector with a sturdy three-prong XLR plug, and, more importantly, replace the Automatic Gain Control (AGC) circuitry of the deck with a manual control. Those were the days! New consumer portable VCR's are so tightly packed and their circuitry so sophisticated, that few technicians are willing to attempt the same operations today.

This is tragic, as there is no worse enemy of good location sound than the AGC that automatically sets the audio level and gives you no way to override it. Listen to an interview recorded on a VCR with AGC: every time the speaker pauses, the microphone automatically reaches out for that ambient background noise, producing — especially in your third generation edited master — an annoying "gasp" after every sentence. Until manufacturers begin building half-inch and 8mm equipment with manual level control, the only answer is to record using industrial ¾-inch equipment. If you only have access to ½-inch, try to work in locations with as little background noise as possible.

## The Team Effort

Getting good sound calls for cooperation from everyone on the crew, just as good camera work does. What good is that beautiful introductory pan the cameraperson is working so hard to get, if the sound person cannot get close enough to record a good signal? Solutions can usually be

worked out if the two will talk, and think ahead to the editing process.

One technique is to shoot the long shot with the sound person out of the way, recording ambient sound in sync with the video. Then, immediately after, record the same sound with the microphone in the best location for audio. Log the shot, vocally and visually, as "wild sound for scene 23, also taken in sync" (just speak this into the microphone before the recording). The experienced sound person will record an ambient track for every location, earning himself a note of thanks from the editor.

A lot of this is old film-related talk, but it need not be. Most of us film types have grown too careless about video sound, thinking there is no way to apply the same standards because the editing techniques are so different. But as more and more experienced film editors are moving into video, I see this changing for the better.

In summary, ask yourself these questions before recording on location:

1. Have I checked out the locations for sound?
2. Have I *listened* to these places, using a recorder and headphones?
3. Have I worked out the design of my shoot so the visual background will explain the ambient sounds?
4. Have I found mike placement that will give me the best voice quality?
5. Have I discussed my problems and needs with those people who are in positions to help me control the location, and won their cooperation?

*George Stoney is Professor of Film and Video at New York University.*

Photo by Charles I. Savadelis





## No light matter



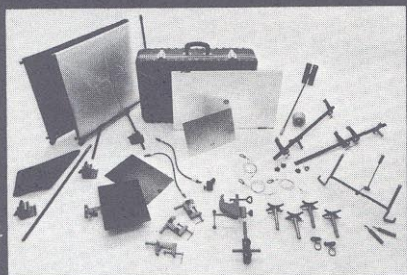
Lowel Systems are uncommonly efficient, compatible, convertible and portable. But, above all, they're built and warranteed\* to be reliable—because equipment failure is no light matter.

\*Lowel warranty:  
lights, 2 years; stands, 5 years.

Lowel-Light Mfg., Inc.  
475 Tenth Ave., New York, N.Y.  
10018-1197. (212) 947-0950.

**lowel**®

38 ways to give your  
lighting a lift



Lowel's Surmountable Kit contains 38 clamping, mounting, rigging, light-diffusing, light-reflecting and shadowing devices. They simplify set-ups and give your lighting a real lift.

Lowel-Light Mfg., Inc.  
475 Tenth Ave., New York, N.Y.  
10018-1197. (212) 947-0950.

**lowel**®

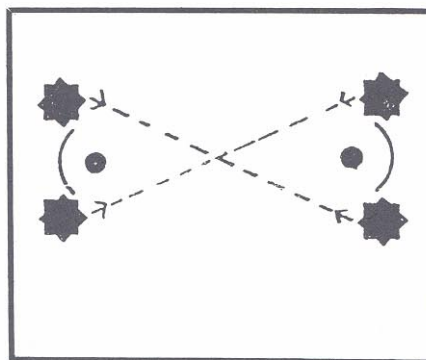
## X Marks The Spot

By Leigh A. Caskey

*Ferris State, Asst. Prof.*

Every director/producer develops a favorite technique or style for lighting a set. Mine is called the "X Theory of Lighting." The "X Theory" is a highly flexible technique that is equally effective on rushed remote shoots or in carefully planned multiple camera situations.

The basis for the theory is an invisible square. The subject(s) is/are placed at the center of the square. A light is placed in each corner and aimed toward the center as pictured in Figure 1.



The front lights may be hung with a diffusing material to soften the shadows on the subjects. The back lights are usually left uncovered on location shoots, but may also be diffused or gelled in creative situations.

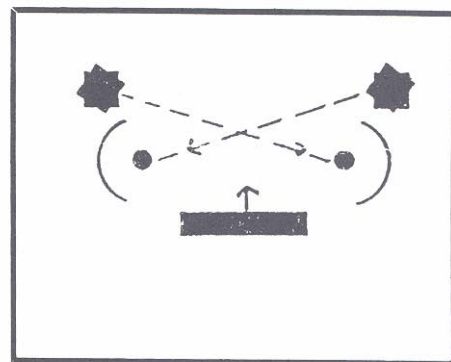
Since in an interview or other "talking head" program the subjects are looking at each other nearly all of the time, the back lights serve two functions: first, the lights act as a traditional backlight for the subject closest to them; second, they serve as a traditional keylight for the subject farther away.

Occasionally an even simpler variation on the "X Theory" can be employed. One pair of corner lights is eliminated and a central bank of lights, a striplight, for example, is substituted. This setup is shown in Figure 2.

When the talent is lit in this way, each has some key lighting, some fill lighting and some back lighting. This will be true

regardless of where the cameras are placed.

For a larger set or non-stationary subjects, the pattern can be repeated as needed. Divide the area into a series of squares and light each square with the "X." Diffusing the lights will cause the squares to melt together smoothly, without a great deal of bright and dark spots.



The "X Theory" has a long history in television lighting, especially in situation comedies filmed with live audiences. The technique is an easy and versatile solution to many lighting problems found in community television productions. Try it — "X" may mark the spot for your favorite lighting style!



# How To Make A Video Tape

By Dick Houston

*Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from a circa-1972 typewritten handbook entitled, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Media (but were afraid to ask)." The book was published by Winnipeg Community Communications, Inc. After fourteen years and quantum leaps in video technology, it is still a complete outline of how to produce a program. Thanks to Tony Karch of the University of Calgary for sending it along.*

Let us suppose that you or your group have something you'd like to share with others in your community or city. Perhaps it's a special event or project you're working on; or perhaps a concern or problem you feel needs to be looked at. Maybe it's a way of showing others how they can help you in what you're doing.

The ideas for a television tape recording are endless. But before they can be made into a tape recording, it is very important you go through a basic procedure, outlined below:

## I. INITIAL DISCUSSION

1. What is your idea?
2. How can you best show your idea in a tape?
3. What is the outline of your idea — the "rough script"?
4. What training will you need?
5. What facts will you need?
6. Who do you want to show your tape to? Why? What effect do you want the tape to have on the people you want to show it to? (Do you want to change their minds? Make them act on your behalf? Share your problems with them? Inform them?)
7. Final shooting script.

## II. PUTTING YOUR IDEA ON TAPE

1. Equipment — what you need.
2. Location — where are the best places for taping? Do you need permission to tape? Do you want to interview anyone?
3. Taping — is your camera recording what you want? Are your pictures and sound clear?

4. Viewing — does the tape say what you want it to? Is more needed? Is anything missing?
5. Tape script — a written outline of all tapes before editing so you know exactly what you have and where to find it.

## III. STUDIO WORK

1. Titles and credits.
2. Still photographs.
3. Sound, narration, music.
4. Special effects.
5. Put it all together (rough script).

## IV. EDITING

1. Are all the ideas on your tape in the best possible order?
2. The final edit.
3. Can it be further improved?

## V. FINAL VIEWING

Does it say what you want it to say?

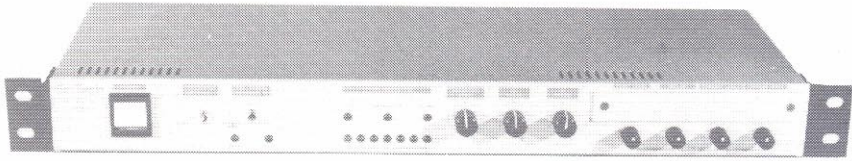
## VI. SO YOU'VE MADE A TAPE

How can your production be shown?

- cable community channel
- low frequency broadcast
- closed circuit TV
- special showing (meeting)

**NEW!**

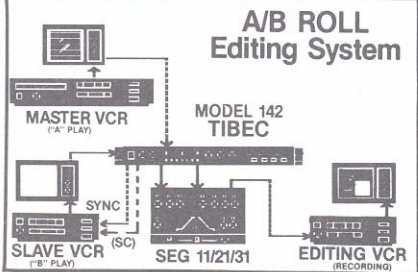
**Model 142 TIBEC**  
**Time Base Corrector & Equalizer**  
**Replaces TWO conventional TBCs for ONLY \$3,995.00**



- A single MODEL 142 TIBEC synchronizes (genlocks) TWO VCRs in playback mode.
- Lets You Create Professional Special Effects (Cuts, Dissolves, Wipes) from two VCRs.
- Can Genlock a VCR to Non-Interlaced Computer Video. Key-in Computer Graphics & Tiles.
- Built-in Reference Sync Generator. Genlocks to VCRs, cameras or stable video sources.
- Built-in Proc-Amp Corrects Slave VCR Video. Optional Proc-Amp for Master VCR Video.
- Compatible with 3/4", 1/2" (VHS or Beta) and new 8mm. VCRs or Camcorders.
- Only ONE VCR requires External Sync for A/B Roll (Double Source) Editing. (See Figure).

NOTE: SciTech offers External Sync installation on selected VCR models. (\$99.00)

**A/B ROLL Editing System**



**DEALER INQUIRIES WELCOME**

**SciTech CORPORATION**

Bringing real innovation directly to you

1450 N.W. 78 Ave., Miami, FL 33126  
 Tel. (305) 591-1620

Call for detailed catalog & Price List

VISA

MasterCard

**CREATE PROFESSIONAL SPECIAL EFFECTS with SciTech SEGs. NEW LOW PRICES.**

SEG-11 Lowest cost modular SEG ..... \$524.00

SEG-21 Includes Genlock for one camera. Use it with cameras not equipped with genlock ..... \$824.00

SEG-31 Auto-Wipe & Fade to Black. Top of the Line ..... \$974.00

**USE SciTech SEGs WITH TWO CAMERAS or TWO VCRs (with Model 142 TIBEC)**

No Risk Direct Order: Try any SciTech unit for 10 days and, if not completely satisfied, return it in its original condition for full refund except shipping costs.

For orders call 1-800-421-4407  
 toll free 1-800-842-0070

Ask for free paper: "Time Base Errors: A look at the Basics"



# Getting Together A Set

By John Glaeser

## Defining Your Project

Before designing a set, make sure the project premise is strong. What helps is a narrative treatment outlining the kind of event, why it is being done, the intended result, audience, format, style, studio environment, talent, budget, production date and any other information that will give you a good idea of what needs to be accomplished. Pass it around, and get a healthy sharing of ideas. Understanding the intention of the project and the general means of accomplishing the goal is the first step in any design.

Secondly, define the environment. Floor dimensions, wall configurations, and ceiling heights are all important. If you are working in a real studio, then the light grid, lighting instruments, control room capabilities, number and kind of cameras and any other detail that catches your attention should be included. Make a free-hand top-view drawing of the space. This is easier if one person, tape measure in hand, calls out the measurements to a second who does the drawing and measurement notation. Using graph paper can make sketching easier, too.

Now, transfer the sketch to an accurate scale drawing. Some simple drafting tools will help: an architect's scale ruler, drawing board, T-square, plastic triangle, pencil, eraser, paper and masking tape. Accurately draw in all the features of the room, and write in the measurements. Later, you may want to darken the outline with a fine-point felt pen. With this diagram as a base, a 3-dimensional scale model sketch can be developed, which will help you figure out the best use of your studio space.

## Getting Ideas

Where do set ideas come from? Start with the narrative treatment; it will indicate content, style, format and so on. Share your viewing experiences with your group and try to bring up examples of things you

have seen on television that relate to what you are aiming to do. You may want to try watching TV with notebook in hand, looking for things that do and do not "work."

Sometimes magazines suggest ideas. *Interior Design Magazine* is a wealth of large color photographs of excellently-designed interior spaces, with fine examples of good visual design and creative lighting effects.

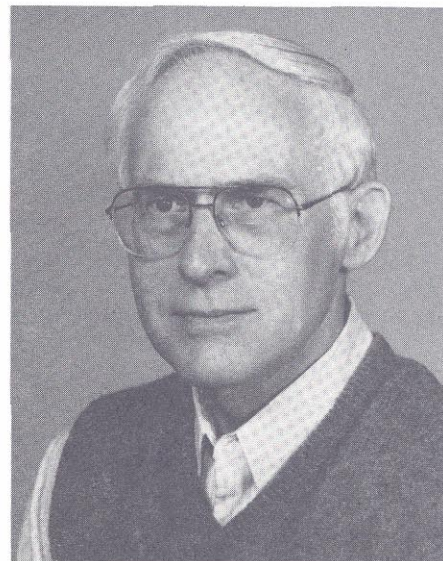
There may be specific references in your script that will require you to make a trip to the library. While there, check out some books relating to theatre craft — there are a few that give good ideas on how to construct sets.

## Visualization

As you plan your design, you must always be aware of the 3-by-4 aspect ratio of the television screen. You may want to do a little sensitivity training by carrying around a small card with a 3 by 4-inch window cut out. You can look through it anytime and any place to practice framing things up. This will help emphasize to your imagination that you are designing for the visual 3-by-4 parameter.

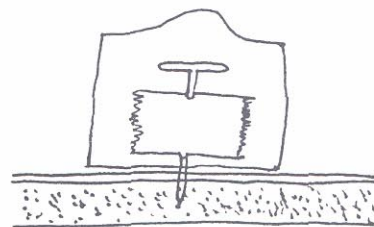
When you begin sharing ideas about your set design project, you will want to visualize them for others. Make a simple scale model — nothing too precious or detailed! — that will indicate the essential idea. The model will show you how the different parts of the set work together: the foreground/background relationship, entry and exit points, and what the perspective will be from different camera angles.

To make your model, start with a base of one-inch thick polystyrene, foam-core (paper-covered polystyrene) or corrugated cardboard. Tape your studio drawing onto it with masking tape. Use a small X-acto knife or scissors to fashion various set pieces out of paper, light card stock (index cards or cereal boxes), or balsa wood. Tape 1½-inch "T" pins on the back of each



*John Glaeser has been a designer with WHA-TV since 1960.*

piece with about ¼-inch sticking out the bottom, which allows you to press it down into the baseboard wherever you want, and easily move it around.



Keep the model simple! Remember it is just a 3-dimensional sketch, not a beautiful reproduction of reality. You can indicate decoration and color ideas with markers, pencils, chalk or poster paint.

For shapes like chairs, benches, tables and people, use plastic modeling clay. This odorless, nontoxic, clean, permanently-malleable material can be cut and squeezed into any shape you like. While you are at it, make some simple models of your cameras — no details, just show how much space they take up.

These bits of paper, cardboard, balsa



and clay become a model kit you and your team can play with, asking visual and spatial design questions and creating answers through your fingertips.

Now, take a 3-by-5 index card and cut

three sizes of rectangular "windows" in it, all with the 3-by-4 TV aspect ratio. Looking through this simple "viewfinder" at your model will simulate the wide, medium and closeup shots from your

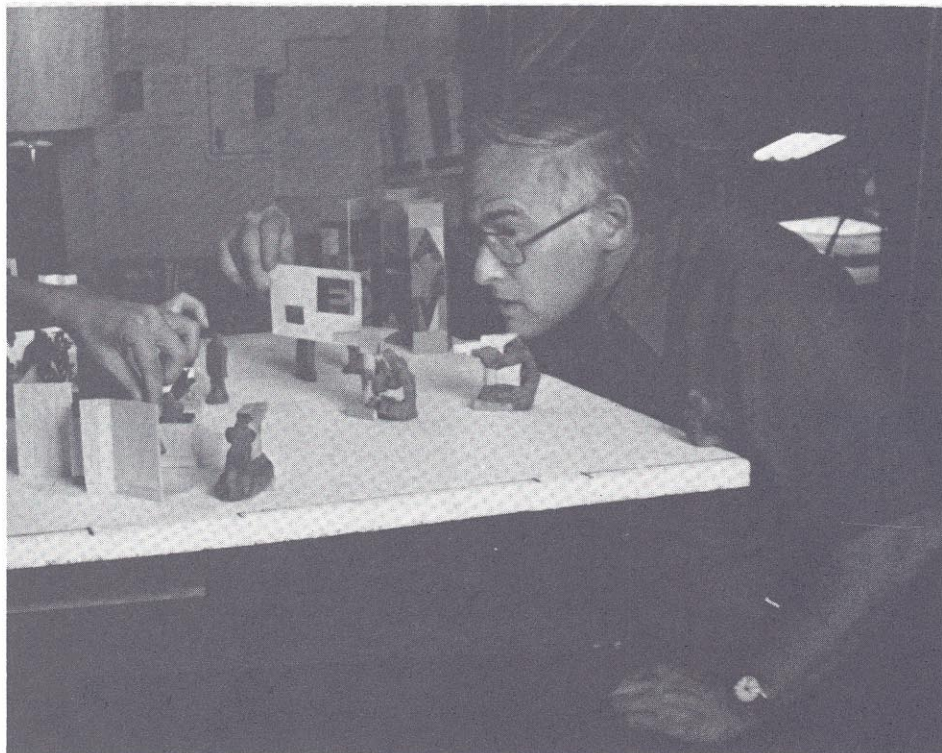
cameras. With your eyes at camera level, move the card around to find the shots you will want.

To help with the eventual placement of the finished set into the studio, a flat floor plan drawing can be made once the model is finished. Take the model apart, drawing outlines of the shapes onto the paper base. This drawing may look shaky, so make a tracing of it, cleaning up the lines and drawing in the lighting grid. On this sheet, you will indicate where to hang the lights.

## Set Materials

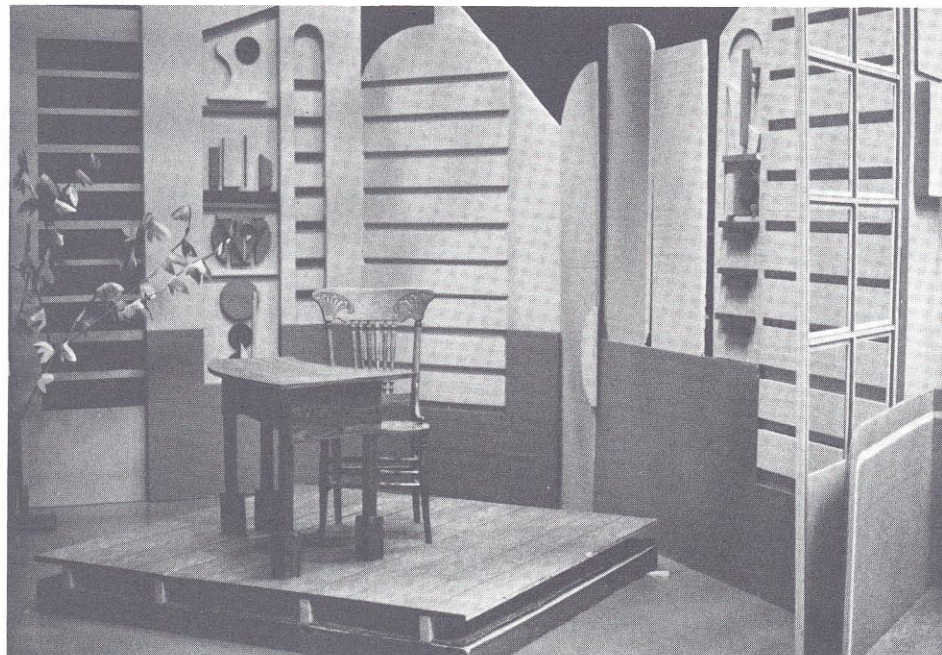
A wide variety of materials may be used for set construction: polystyrene, plywood, lumber, muslin, hung fabrics, plexiglass and cardboard are just some of the possibilities. Table 1 describes the important factors about each of these materials.

A versatile modular system of folding screens can be built easily out of 1-by-2-inch stock lumber. The idea is to hinge together what looks like two ladder forms (See Figure 1). An example would be two

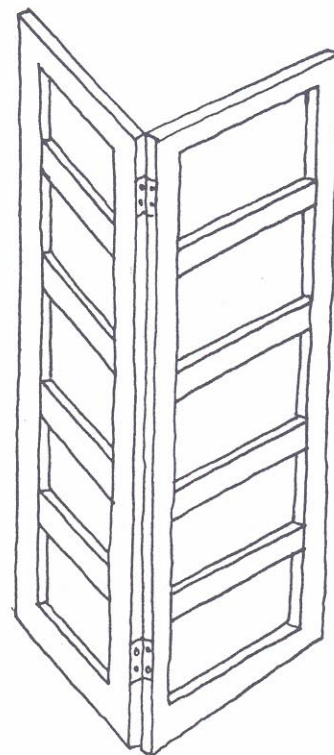


*WHA-TV Scenic Designer John Glaeser working with a scale model.*

*Free standing light weight staging made of polystyrene and cardboard. From the set for Prime Time Madison, Shirwil Lukes, designer.*



*Figure 1. Hinged Ladder Flat.*

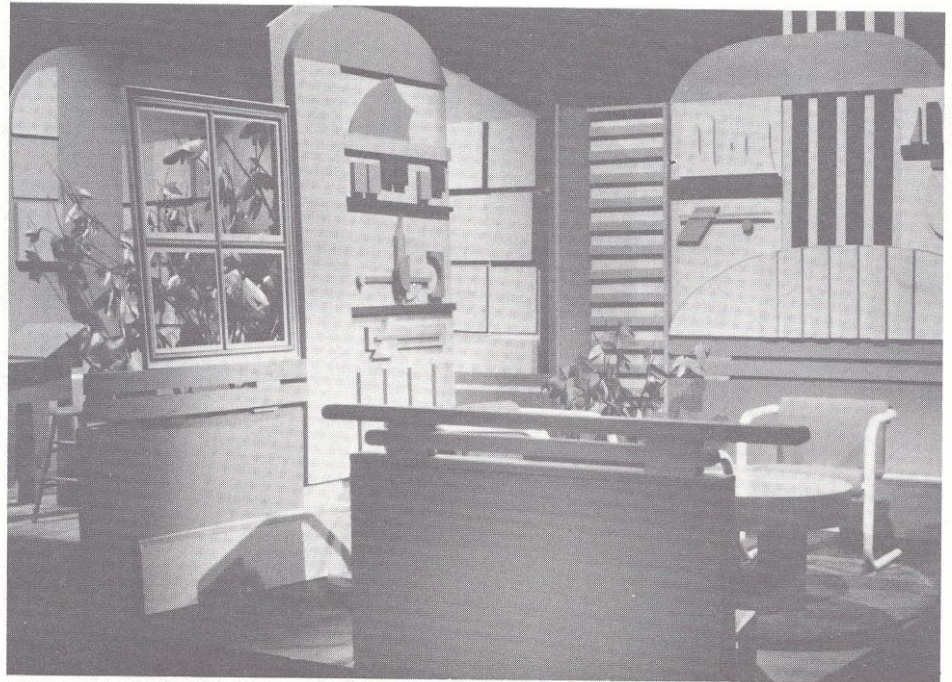
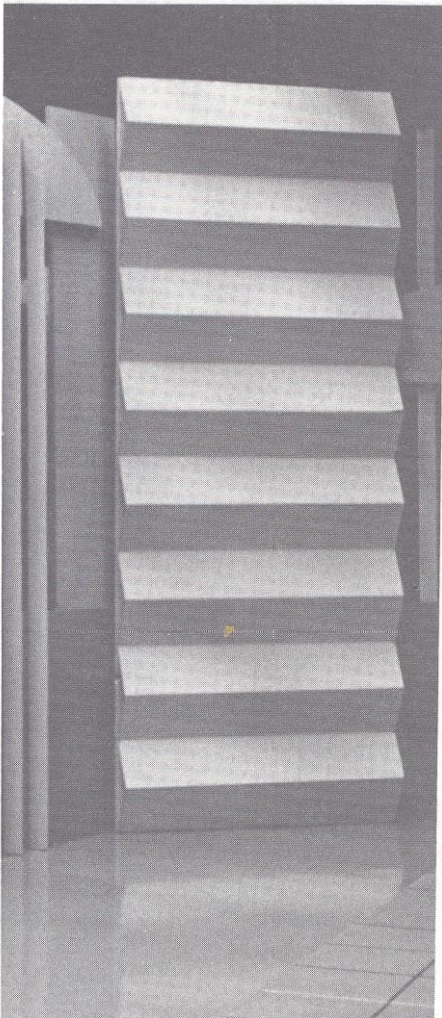




open ladder shapes, each 2 feet wide and 7 feet high, with horizontal rungs every foot. When two of these sections are hinged along the 7 foot edge, they become a free-standing winged unit with an interesting three-dimensional appearance.

If you have a number of these ladder units, you can slip shelves through the rungs to create a system for displaying objects. Or, you can attach posters or fabric panels to front of the ladders. You will find many ways to attach things with tacks, sticky tape, staples, nails, picture wire or Velcro. The back of shapes to be mounted can be fitted with cardboard tabs that can be bent out to line up with the rungs and then attached. If the ladder modules will be carrying quite a bit of weight, anchor them at the bottom with sand bags or concrete blocks.

*Part 2 of this article, to be continued in the next issue of CTR, will discuss other set construction and decoration techniques.*



*Light weight staging using polystyrene primarily with additional parts of foam core, cardboard, plywood, formica, carpet and paper foliage.*





# Table of Construction Materials

MATERIAL	SIZE	COST	AVAILABLE AT	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	COMMENTS
¼-inch Corrugated Cardboard	4x8-foot sheet	\$2.00	Box fabricators — Yellow Pages under “Boxes-Corrugated & Fiber”	Cheap. Cuts easily with knife. Light, rigid.	Warps when painted (Paint both sides).	Common box material.
1-inch Polystyrene	4x8-foot sheet, Also 8-inch thick blocks	\$4.00	Lumber yards. Also in Y.P. under “Insulation Materials”	Cheap. Cuts with easily with knife. Very light, rigid.	Easily dented. Bits pick up static and stick to everything.	Also called “white bead board.”
Wood Boards	Vary	Vary	Lumber Yards.	Durable. Takes any finish. Easily available. Use nails or screws, hinges, other hardware.	Expensive. Cut with saw. Heavy.	Normally use white pine lumber.
Plywood	4x8-foot sheet, varied thickness	Vary	Lumber Yards.	Durable. Takes any finish. Easily available. Use nails or screws, hinges, other hardware.	Expensive. Cut with saw. Heavy.	
Unbleached Muslin Fabric	By the yard, in rolls	Vary	Some fabric stores, or in Y.P. under “Theatrical Equipment & Supplies.”	Cheap. Use to cover plywood or wood frames to make flats.	Not a rigid construction material.	
LUAN (⅛-inch mahogany plywood)	4x8-foot sheet	Vary	Door manufacturers.	Rich appearance. Flexible.	Expensive. Not self-supporting.	Use for curved news desks.
Foam-core	4x8-foot sheet, varied thickness	\$30.00	Art Supply stores.	Very light and easy to cut with knife. Smooth white surface.	Easily dented. Expensive.	Styrofoam Core covered both sides w/heavy paper.





*Hometown USA  
Video Festival Winner*



**STARTING DATE:****October 3**

"IN THE DUST OF DREAMS," the Mennonites of West Texas tell their story of struggle and survival. Produced by David Harrienger, Jr. of Austin.

**Learning Channel series times:**

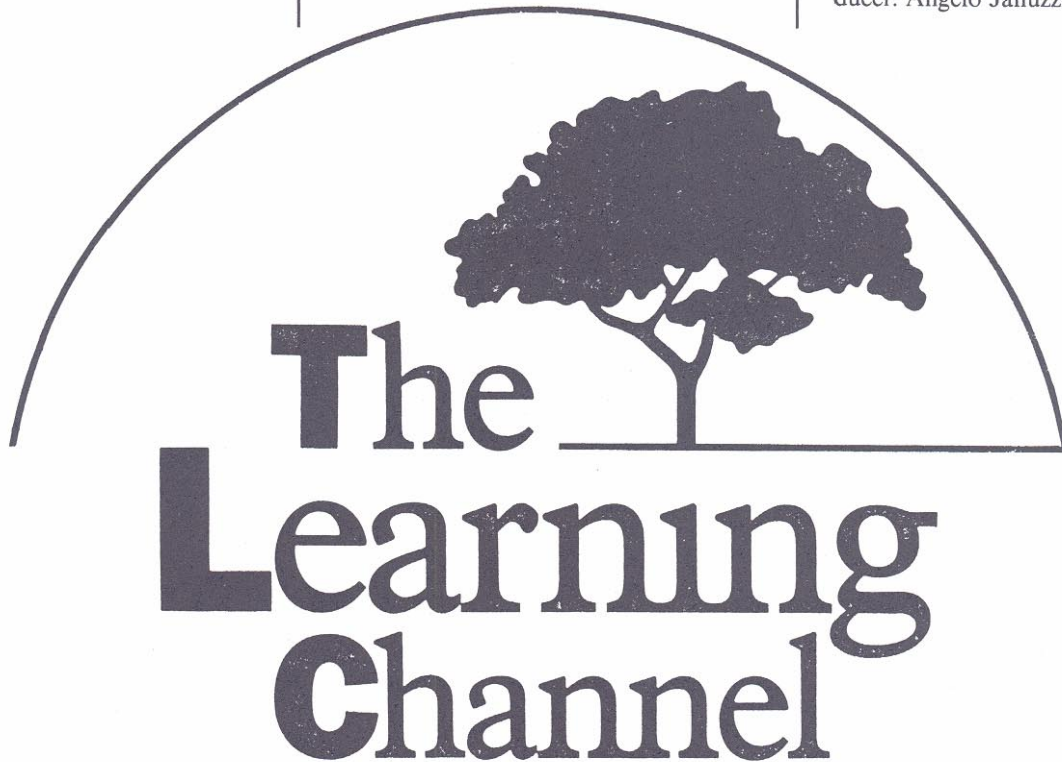
**Fridays 8:30PM**

**Saturdays 10:30PM**

**(following) Mondays 11:30PM**  
**(ALL TIMES EASTERN)**

**November 14**

"BURNSIDE" is a commercial and residential district in the Southwest Bronx. Government programs have bypassed this neighborhood of burnt-out and fire-bombed buildings and rubble lots. Producer: Angelo Januzzi, Bronxville, NY.

**October 10**

"ALONE TOGETHER" was originally produced for a conference about single parents, and single parents and their children play all the key roles. Produced by Gae Rusk for Human Services TV, Honolulu, HI.

**October 17**

"BOTH SIDES OF THE STREET" was produced by Barbara Neal, who worked as a showgirl for 16 years in San Francisco's Tenderloin district and left to pursue a master's degree in film. The program intimately portrays life, love and hardship in the Tenderloin.

**October 24 and 31 (2 parts)**

"SOMETHING TO WIN THE WAR" is a historical documentary about the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington State. The program focuses on the recently declassified diary of Col. Franklin T. Matthias, who selected the Hanford site and headed its construction and operation. Produced by Robert Mull of the Yakima Valley Museum, Yakima, WA.

**November 7**

"LETTA'S FAMILY" A moving portrait of life in Appalachia, produced by high school students working with New York City's Educational Video Center. Producers: Johnny Tavaras and Sue Ellison.

**November 21**

"TRIATHLON: THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE" Producer Dawn Lane of Palomar College, San Marcos, CA focuses on a group of triathlon athletes, in order to explore why individuals push themselves to the limit of endurance.

**November 28**

"BURNING WASTE" tackles one of the issues that city government officials face and the public rarely understands. Produced by Sandra Holden for the City of Long Beach, CA.

**December 5**

"RATTLESNAKES AND REUNIONS" focuses on an event unique to this community of rural Georgia. Produced by Sue March and Farley Barge, Decatur, GA.



# Unraveling The Editing Process

By Alida Thacher

Editing is the one part of my life that I'm compulsive about. My house is a mess, my desk total confusion, but my edits are clean and tight. I'm one of those people who, given enough cutaways, will edit out my talent's "ums" and pauses to make the piece move along milliseconds faster.

Those milliseconds do count. Perhaps the most common mistake in editing is allowing the program to drag. The viewers are relying on you, the producer/editor, to sift through your material and provide them with the most important, most interesting parts of your story and to present them in a well-polished fashion.

We all have a tendency to fall in love with our own video. Usually, we are genuinely interested in the content of the pieces we are editing, and it is easy to assume that our viewers are going to be just as interested. What may be hard to remember is that, more often than not, our subject will be enhanced by the removal of unnecessary material.

Listen to your interviews carefully. Very often, just one sentence will summarize and clarify your subject's complete answer, and make the point much more dramatically. Even if you don't want to reduce the interview to just one "sound bite," you can always find at least some sentences to trim.

Editing gives you the opportunity to move things around, too. There is no reason whatsoever to structure your piece according to the order in which you asked the questions. And if the answer to your fifth question amplifies the answer to your second question, string the answers together.

Always keep in mind that this is television, not real life. Your job as editor is to translate life into television.

## The Editing Process

How do you begin this translation? First, log your video carefully, thinking not only about which shots are in focus and where they are on the tape, but also what, exactly, you have for content. Listen to

your interviews, not only to log good sound bites but also for necessary background to the story. Look at all your cutaways — those shots that relate to the topic or which illustrate something in your story — and your cut-ins — closeups of particular actions — and note which ones are particularly good. Obviously, the more good video you have, the easier the editing process will become.

After you have the accurate times and your impressions of your video noted on your log, try to give yourself a couple of days to let all those images simmer. Let your subconscious sift through the details. Then take your log and write a script, choosing your sound bites, composing your voiceovers (narration), and putting it all in the right order.

## Audio First!

Now you are ready to sit down at the editor. First, record all your audio sources — voiceovers, music, sound effects, wild sound, etc. — on videotape that are not already there. This will allow you to use the programming and previewing capabilities of your edit controller to make accurate audio edits. You have to record video on this tape as well, so use a stable source like a color bar generator, switcher, or your camera.

Next, construct the primary audio track for the story. Be a perfectionist! Clipped-off words, varying audio levels, beginnings of words not meant to be there, breath intakes on voiceovers — these have no place on the audio track; they are very distracting and tend to indicate a lazy editor. Making as close to a perfect audio track as your equipment is capable of is always worth the effort.

Record your audio track on audio channel 2, using either the Assemble Mode (if your tape is blank) or Insert Mode (if you have previously recorded black video on the entire tape). Although you will be recording video along with the audio, don't pay any attention to the video at this point. Your goal when you are finished is

to be able to listen to the tape play back with your eyes closed and have the story make sense, not be able to tell where the edits are, and have the track be easy to understand and pleasant to listen to.

## Now, The Video

When you are satisfied with your primary audio track, go back to the beginning of the story and work on the video. **ALWAYS DO THIS IN THE VIDEO INSERT MODE!** Accidentally using the Assemble Mode will destroy the audio track you just worked so hard on, as well as the control track which contains the timing pulses that lock in the speed of your VCR. Check, and double-check, that you are not in the Assemble Mode before you start.

A lot of the video that you recorded along with the live audio will probably be fine. You taped your interviewee in an interesting setting, had good lighting, and changed your focal length (zoomed in or out) between each answer so that you have a variety of shots. But because you edited your audio track down to its best form by cutting your interviewee's answers, you probably have a number of "jump cuts" to cover up.

A jump cut occurs when two pieces of video that are right next to each other don't match, but very nearly do, and therefore don't give the impression of continuous action. A typical example would be when you edit out a part of a person's answer, and the camera is positioned exactly the same before and after the edit. The first video clip shows the person's mouth and expression in a different place on the screen from the next clip. You could get away with this if your shot changed, for example, from a closeup to a medium shot, but if it does not, then you have a jump cut.

A jump cut is a jolt to the eye, and are to be avoided except in very limited cases where they might add a bit of intensity to the interview. Watch for them on interview programs like "60 Minutes." My usual impression is that the editor decided



to leave in a jump cut because there was nothing appropriate to cut away to. Use them sparingly, or not at all.

With that in mind, it's easy to start inserting video into your story. Work through your tape, covering every one of the jump cuts with cutaways or cut-ins. Your average shot will run between three and five seconds, longer if there is good action in the shot (a horse cantering around a ring, a car going by, ski jumping, etc.). A cutaway shot should never be shorter than three seconds, otherwise there is not enough time for the viewer's eye to absorb the image.

During the logging process, you should have selected cutaway shots that are appropriate to the dialogue of the moment. If you don't have the perfect shot, stick to something else! You'd be surprised what you can get away with when using cutaways. Also, if you find yourself caught short of good shots, go ahead and use the same shot twice in the same story. The eye is pretty forgiving about repeats; it is not at all tolerant of jump cuts.

One unbreakable rule in editing video: Never cut on a Zoom! It looks terrible! Either end the shot after the zoom is over and the camera is steady again, or eliminate the zoom entirely. That may mean you cannot use a shot because the zoom takes too long, but that is still a better alternative than cutting on the zoom. And next time out, you will know not to use the zoom on the camera so much.

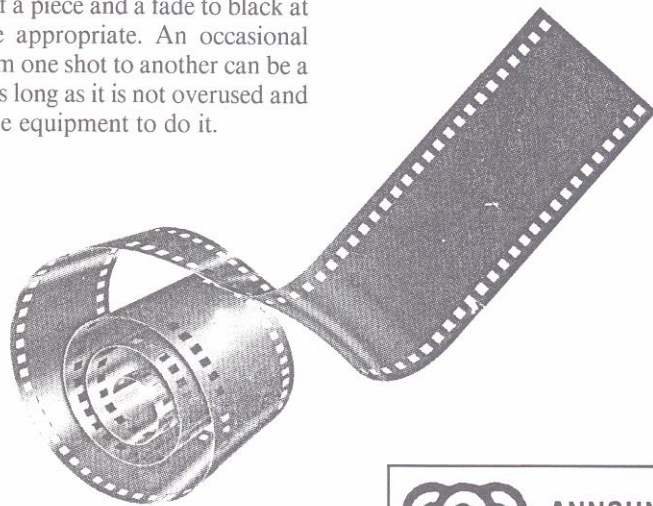
When you can, mix in the natural background sound from the cutaways into the audio track by turning on the audio channel 1 Insert Mode. If you are working on a piece about parks, and you are inserting a shot of a softball game, add the whack of the bat and the spectators' cheers to your tape. A more complex audio track adds a nice, important dimension to the story. But make sure you keep the level below that of your primary track — you don't want to make it hard to hear the interview.

When possible, put more than one cutaway at a time in the story, particularly if the shots you are using are short. It makes the tape more visually interesting, and hides the fact that you are covering up unusable video. Also, put cutaways in places other than just over jump cuts and bad pictures. Good cutaways are much more interesting than the speaker's face, unless that speaker is someone we are very interested in seeing. Once the identity of the speaker has been established, the viewer really does not need or want to see a whole lot more of that particular "talking head."

## Transitions — Getting From A To B

Moving your story around in time and space is a difficult job in editing, especially with simple equipment. Moviemakers established the conventions used for transitions at the turn of the century. For example, cuts from shot to shot generally signal to the viewer that the shots immediately follow each other. A fade or a dissolve between shots signals that there has been some passage of time between the images.

Fades or dissolves should be used sparingly, and with an eye towards those conventions. A fade up from black at the beginning of a piece and a fade to black at the end are appropriate. An occasional dissolve from one shot to another can be a nice effect as long as it is not overused and you have the equipment to do it.



In most cases, however, you will be cutting from shot to shot. That means that if your reporter is talking to someone at one location, and you follow that scene with him or her at another location, you cannot just cut immediately from one scene to the next. Such an edit is a real jolt to the viewer. You have to give the audience some visual clue about how your reporter got from point A to point B. You may have the reporter walk out of the first shot and into the next, or you could cut to another piece of video for a few seconds in between (thus "giving your reporter time to get there").

Transitions in time and place can also be accomplished by using a musical segue (pronounced "segway"), a bit of music with some relevant video between scenes. One caution is not to let the segue go on too long; an average segue will run ten to twenty seconds. Another caution is that this device, like fades and dissolves, will be effective only if it is not overused.

Except in very straightforward "live-on-tape" projects, good editing is time-consuming, challenging, and improves tremendously with practice. But editing is also the most creative aspect of remote production. Editing will determine what your finished piece looks and sounds like, so take the time to practice, experiment, get creative, and enjoy!

*Alida Thacher is the instructor for the Program in Community Television at Mt. Hood Community College, Gresham, Oregon.*



### ANNOUNCING . . .

#### MUNICIPAL USES OF CABLE

Gives profiles and descriptions of municipal programming efforts around the country. Includes articles on programming, a survey of 50 programming operations, a list of program sources and more. A great resource for any office. (50 pages, \$15.00 postpaid.)

#### THE CABLE JOB GUIDE

Describes entry-level opportunities in:

- cable systems
- program production & services
- engineering
- government
- law
- related fields

Includes 15 appendices of "Who's Who" in the cable industry, government, press, citizens' groups, plus placement services and training programs. (54 pages, \$9.50 postpaid.)

Also . . .

#### THE COMMUNITY MEDIUM

The state of the art in cable. Includes technology overview, glossary, case studies of local programming, two-way services, educational uses. (180 pages, \$18.50 postpaid.)

Also available:

#### NONCOMMERCIAL USES FOR I-NETS (An Anthology)

Call or write for free brochure:

The Cable Television Information Center  
1500 North Beauregard Street  
Alexandria, VA 22311  
(703) 845-1705



# Quiet On The Set... Live In 30 Seconds!

By Muriel Fleischmann

As in the early days of broadcast television, when access goes live there is an element of risk which excites both viewers and participants. The politicians preen, the game show victims giggle, and even the League of Women Voters jazzes up a little. If the audio is on by mistake, the whole town hears the crew ordering pizza.

Although things can and do go wrong, there are advantages in doing live productions when possible. At West Hartford Community Television, we use certain criteria to determine whether to go live:

**1. When the event has real time value.**  
The election night results are stale the next

day, but viewers will watch access if local results are cablecast live.

**2. When interaction is valuable.**  
Whether you plan live call-ins or produce a game show that solicits contributions from the audience during the contest, the unexpected fun of hearing the voice of a "non-TV" person localizes and energizes the result.

**3. Public meetings.** Live coverage of town council and other important hearings has been a popular staple for community producers for years. If you can wire a hearing room for live cablecast and then encourage use of the room by groups desir-

ing television coverage, you can make tuning in to live presentations a regular habit for cable subscribers.

## How Do You Pull Together A Live production?

Any producer who presents a plan to an access center needs to think through the production needs before inviting committee action. While a major benefit of live production is the inclusion of many people in the work, making good assignments is essential. We designate an Executive Producer to do this.

*Congratulations*  
to the  
**National Federation of Local Cable Programmers**  
*on your*  
**10th Anniversary**  
from  
**The CommunityChannel**

**Gillcable**  
**the PERFORMER** ★★

1302 NO. FOURTH STREET  
SAN JOSE, CA 95112



For any large production, it is important to have these three teams, which may overlap in personnel:

1. The technical crew, led by the Director.
2. The program team, led by the Producer or Host.
3. The production support team, including people dealing with publicity, sets, and funding needs.

The Executive Producer outlines the jobs needed and picks the key person on each team. The other jobs can then be opened to volunteers, or can be offered by the team leaders to trusted workers. New people who want to help are welcomed as Production Assistants and asked to fill jobs as they arise; in election work that may mean calling in the results from polling places, writing the numbers on a blackboard, bringing in interview guests or tending coffee.

Leadership from the Executive Director is crucial to effective working production meetings. Each meeting should have an agenda, with team leaders reporting on what has been accomplished and what needs doing. It is important that small teams and individuals work out details between meetings of the whole crew.

## Live Production Possibilities

The easiest live productions are meetings where the technical crew runs the show. Even at regular Council meetings, we urge the producer to preplan with the Mayor and Town Clerk so we can know the agenda, what speakers are expected to appear (so we can type their names into the character generator), whether there is a special seating plan or if there is something unusual planned — like the lights going out for a slide presentation.

Audio is the biggest problem at public meetings. We take the audio from the hearing room public address system, so advance testing is essential. We also set up a separate microphone so the producer can introduce the meeting, explain the agenda, or do a voiceover during the meeting or an interview during a recess. We feel that this

service makes watching the meeting on cable better than actually being there.

Special programs, like election nights or a game show, require much more work and several months of planning. We allow three months for our game show, and we begin work on the November election coverage in July.

Reserving the date and the people to appear on that date are crucial. Election night is fixed, and crew members have to commit to saving that date well in advance. Where you have the freedom to choose a date, find out when major public meetings or events are occurring so you can avoid conflicts. Your goal is to get a real share of the audience.

## Planning Your Production

**BUDGET:** Will there be expenses for this production? For what? Where will the money come from? Is fundraising part of your preplanning?

**TECHNICAL:** What jobs are needed? When is crew call? Will crew set up and take a break, or stay until the program is over? Will food be served to the crew? Are there tapes to be played? Is there character generator work? Have you asked the cable operator to check the upstream feed so you know it works?

**FLOOR MANAGEMENT:** Do you need headsets, cue cards, methods of moving guests or sets on and off? Who will announce guests? How will new information (election results, for example) be relayed to the host?

**HOSTS:** Are they knowledgeable, or will background be necessary for them? Will facts need to be fed to them during the evening? Do they know special cues and problems to watch for? Do they know what to wear? How will they handle telephone call-ins?

**GUESTS:** Who will greet them when they arrive? Have they received information in advance so they know what to wear, when and where to go, what to expect, and how long they will stay? Will there be a waiting room for them with a television set to watch the show? Will there be food? Where can their guests

watch, if they are permitted to bring guests?

**PROMOTION:** Will the press be invited to cover the event? Have they received advance releases and phone calls? Who will greet them and show them where they can watch? Who will take photographs to send the newspapers for next year's publicity?

**AUDIENCE:** Will you have one? Will they participate? Will they be coming to a podium microphone? Will a camera be on them? Will they be lit? Will the size of the audience be important to show? Will someone need to "warm up" the audience prior to the show?

**CLEANUP:** Who will strike the set, send thank-you notes to anyone who donated time, money, energy or services, and clip press items for the scrapbook?

This sampler of the tasks to anticipate will help the Executive Producer think about the scope of responsibilities arising in a live production. While there may be spontaneity gained from not having everything planned, it is reassuring to have the major issues decided. You can be sure that you will have enough unforeseen problems to worry about the night of the show!

---

*Muriel Fleischmann is manager of West Hartford Community Television in Connecticut.*



# Government Access: Cablecasting The Council

By Andy Beecher

The municipal programmer's "window on government" is not always an easy window to open. Even a city council reknowned for its government-in-the-sunshine may be reticent, at least at first, about allowing your cameras and related paraphernalia into its chambers. You may have already explained that you will be objective, that you are nice people with unobtrusive equipment, that you will not edit the tape, and that "Yes, people *will* watch, trust me!"

Good intentions notwithstanding, there will still be the councilperson or commissioner who will see the electronic window as an extension of the perfunctory (and often unflattering) news clips seen every night at 11:00, or as a potential threat to the decorum of the meeting—that is, until you show them otherwise.

It is imperative that, in covering public meetings, we not only utilize the very best production techniques we can, but that we are as sensitive to the dynamics of the meeting and to the needs of its participants as possible. (Imagine a TV crew walking into your office to cover one of your staff meetings!) In this article, we will explore some techniques to use which will help you accomplish these objectives.

## TURN OFF THOSE LIGHTS!

Probably your most important concern is to use as little light as possible, and still get a good picture. How do you solve this problem?

One answer is to have enough money to buy very sensitive cameras. Many cameras these days claim to provide usable pictures with just a few footcandles of light, and some of them actually do look fine at 40 or 50fc. If you can afford to equip your government programming center with these, you will be able to provide color pictures acceptable to all but the most strident video engineer.



If you have no plumbicon or other "exoticon" in your future and will have to get some light on the council somehow, here are some tips:

First, get your lights close to the council and up high, so they are pointed down at about a 50-degree angle. That may mean needing more ceiling than you've got, in which case you might consider raising the ceiling. This solution may be quite practicable in cases where the council chambers have a suspended ceiling with several feet of air space above. Several configurations are possible, provided the council and staff can be persuaded to let you alter the room's appearance a bit.

A second possibility in a room with a low ceiling (provided it is white) is to bounce your lights off it. Because a white surface will not reflect all of the light you aim at it, you will have to have more (or more powerful) lighting instruments. These will generate additional heat, which may put some strain on the room's air conditioning system. Still, the soft lighting

provided should make things less blinding for the council and still give you the light level you need for television.

Whether or not you are fortunate enough to have a high ceiling, it is a good idea to put some kind of diffusion material in front of your lights. Get some gel frames and experiment with different materials, until you find one that gives you enough light for good video without being painful for your council to look at.

Determine where your council and staff people frequently are looking during a meeting. Sit down in the audience and watch, observing who addresses whom, and how often, and try to see whether you can keep your lights at angles that avoid those frequent sight-lines.

There are many ways that municipal programmers handle the lighting problem. In Pocatello, Idaho, the Channel 12 producers have to make do with fluorescent lights. Madison, Wisconsin also uses fluorescents, although the council installed



additional fluorescent fixtures for video and the cable TV department hopes to add incandescent lighting in the future.

On the other end of the spectrum, Tacoma (Washington) Municipal Television uses this array of instruments in their coverage of city council:

- (4) 1000-watt Floods in front
- (2) 650-watt Keylights for the podium
- (6) 450-watt Backlights behind the council
- (1) 650-watt Backlight for the audience
- (1) 1000-watt Flood for the staff
- (4) 650-watt Fill lights

Tacoma uses diffusion materials over their lights, yet the dais is still lit to a level of 120 footcandles.

## How Many Cameras?

Most council meetings are covered with two or three cameras. There are actually some done with only one. While a single camera might be all a community can afford to start with, it is worth going to great lengths to find a second camera and at least a basic switcher. (You may be able to borrow these from a public access facility or educational institution, in return for loaning them your equipment when needed.)

One-camera coverage is very difficult to watch—there are either constant zooms and pans as the cameraperson tries to pick up each speaker, or else a static wide shot of the entire dais, with each council member showing up as a very small spot on the screen.

Two cameras are acceptable for most meetings. Set up the second camera at one side of the chambers, so you get at least a profile shot of citizens testifying before the council from the podium. You may be able to turn the podium toward the camera so you get a better angle.

If you have three cameras, you are really set. One camera can be stationed so it directly faces the podium, and will also be useful for shooting city staff members seated down front. The other two cameras can both be at the rear, alternating between wide shots and closeups of council members.

If your cameras have tally lights, you might consider disconnecting or covering them. They do keep your camera operators aware of when they are on, and they may occasionally keep someone from walking in front of the lens. However, many argue that the "little red light" reminds council members of the presence of television, bringing out the inadvertent or intentional Hollywood tendencies of the politician.

Some municipal programmers are using remote control cameras, allowing them to cover meetings with a minimum of staff and without the obtrusive camera operators, cables, headsets and tripods in the chambers. If you investigate remote controls, make sure the pan, tilt, focus and zoom motors operate *silently*.

## Audio

Have you ever met a radio person who had an ounce of respect for the way television crews handle audio? "You guys treat audio as an afterthought," I've been chided. They are at least partially right, especially when it comes to coverage of meetings.

The most common "quick-fix" technique for audio is to plug the council's public address system directly into your video recorder and take whatever you get. This may be ill-advised, because PA systems are designed for sound reinforcement, not for critical recording. They are set up to drive speakers that will carry sound throughout the room, and are adjusted to minimize feedback. Furthermore, if nobody is riding the levels on each microphone (as is generally the case), there tends to be a very "boomy" sound, as multiple microphones simultaneously pick up voices, paper shuffling and other ambient sounds.

If you plan to use the PA system as your audio source, it would be wise to look into installation of a voice-activated, or "VOX" system. VOX circuits keep each microphone silent until someone speaks into it, then instantly turns on and adjusts to the correct level. VOX systems are expensive, and they must be carefully installed and adjusted to work properly. Still, VOX could make a big improvement in your cablecast audio, as well as in the sound reinforcing performance of the PA system itself.

The optimal system is one where a skilled audio technician is constantly riding the mic levels on an audio mixing console. The console should be placed so the technician can easily watch the proceedings.

There are many good choices in microphones, with a good dynamic mic having a cardioid pickup pattern being the most common. Condenser microphones sound a little crisper, but these must be powered either by an internal battery or via a "phantom power supply" built into the PA system.

Many cities are now also using the Pressure Zone Microphone, or "PZM." This is a tiny microphone mounted on a 2- to 6-inch-square flat plate, and is an excellent choice for picking up sound from wandering presenters. The PZM may be taped or glued to any flat surface, or simply laid flat on a table.

Lavalier mics may also be useful for speakers who will be walking around. One warning however: if the microphone is not connected to the PA system but is only feeding your video recorder, you may find that the speakers will forget to put it on.

## GRAPHICS

The capability to provide text information to viewers about who is speaking and what issue is being discussed is extremely valuable to the municipal producer. To get it, you need a character generator that is fast and easy to operate, and that generates clear and readable text.

In particular, you should have a unit that allows you to run a *Crawl* across the bottom of the screen, quickly and with just a few keystrokes. Although frequent crawls may be distracting to some viewers, the information on the meeting's proceedings can greatly help your audience understand what is going on. They also have an added function: the crawl may catch the casual "zapper"—the cable subscriber who, remote control in hand, just happens to scan by your channel.

## Distribution

Now that you have everything you need to shoot your council meeting, how are you



going to get the program to the cable subscribers? You can cablecast it live if your cable system is capable of upstream transmission; or you can record it and play back the tape (or you can do both).

If you are going to "go live," have a television set plugged into a cable drop in the council chambers, so you can monitor what the signal really looks and sounds like to the home viewer. If the cable operator has to do any signal switching at the head end, you will want to know for sure that your program really is being cablecast.

If you are going to record your meeting, have two VCR's plugged into the video system so that you can start a second tape before the first one runs out. Let the two tapes overlap for a few minutes, and cover

the overlap with a "PLEASE STAND BY FOR PART 2" message, added later with an insert edit.

## Learn From Others

Of course, there is no single right or wrong way to cover public meetings. Production technique will be dependent on architecture, political reality, budget, equipment configuration and personalities. I would heartily recommend that centers who are seeking to begin or upgrade their coverage of government proceedings visit other centers and ask them to show their facilities and share their insights.

*Andy Beecher is Acting Director of the Metropolitan Area Cable Commission, Multnomah County, Oregon.*

# Saluting our "hometowns" around the country and NFLCP's "Hometown USA"



**Service You Can See**



# How Portland Makes Money In Commercial Production

By Ellen Notbolm

*"It works out nicely for everybody."*

*It's a phrase used often by Richard Warner, coordinator of a steadily growing commercial production department at Rogers Cable TV in Portland, Oregon. Warner smiles when he says it. He has reason to.*

*In the past two years, Rogers has utilized existing local origination facilities to generate \$200,000 in revenue. A diverse clientele ranging from insurance carriers to health care professionals have been the beneficiaries of low-cost, high quality video productions from Rogers. It is a loosely-guarded secret that is beginning to draw the serious attention of local business. Rogers and Warner welcome the attention, and Warner was happy to share his thoughts on these developments.*

**CTR: In what sorts of commercial programming has Rogers become involved?**

**RW:** Training tapes, informational shorts, sales presentations, talk shows, exercise tapes and, of course, conventional commercials and spot advertisements.

**CTR: How did it start?**

**RW:** In the last five to eight years, we and other cable companies have constructed complete local origination production facilities originally intended only to meet franchise commitments. But now, we're beginning to recognize that these facilities have the potential to generate revenue through commercial production. For the client, it means that there are now more places to go to create their own videotapes at costs far more reasonable than anything previously available.

**CTR: How reasonable? For instance, I recently viewed a sixteen-minute multimedia slide show commissioned by a county agency. They paid \$15,000 for it.**

**RW:** We could probably have done a video version of that for \$1,000 to \$2,000. There are several reasons why the cost is so low. First, they probably hired an outside consultant to design and script the program. A freelance television producer like

that charges around \$25 per hour. Then there's the cost of having it actually produced. Many of the available post-production facilities in Portland are so elaborate that they have to charge rates in the range of \$1,100 per minute of tape.

By going through the local cable company, the client bypasses a lot of overhead costs. Our facility is in place, and we are looking for new ways to utilize it. We have the equipment, the tape stock, and the people available to produce the program.

**CTR: Did you advertise to get started?**

**RW:** We never went formally into the marketplace saying, Look, we offer these services. Work just started coming in naturally when independent producers began to realize they could charge their clients a lot less by going to the local cable companies. They wouldn't have to pay \$250-300 an hour for editing in those elaborate post-production facilities. Now, I'm not saying one should never go to those facilities; when you need their level of capabilities, then go.

**CTR: What kind of capabilities?**

**RW:** One-inch tape and digital effects. One-inch is the highest end of quality. Use it if you are doing a music video for MTV and you expect to generate a million dollars in record sales. In cases where you want the message, "Quality" to come across, one-inch is almost essential. But ¾-inch is the preferred format for most industrial work, and that's what we do.

**CTR: Can you accommodate the client who wants his program on half-inch tape?**

**RW:** Yes, but we still master on ¾-inch. We can transfer down to half-inch and the quality is still there. But the client will pay for that ¾-inch quality.

**CTR: What are some of the other reasons for a client to use the cable facilities?**

**RW:** Many times, you can strike a beautiful symbiosis with the cable company. Let's say you have a public relations tape

that is suitable for more than just internal use; you'd like to share it with the community. Because we are a cable operator with multiple channels to fill, there is an enormous amount of time available to industrial users.

For example, suppose I own a health club and I have a five-minute tape of health tips. By playing that tape on cable, I spread a dual message: I give the public some information about staying healthy, and I let them know that my business is concerned about them.

**CTR: Why is it necessarily better if it's produced by cable?**

**RW:** A commercial broadcaster can't play my five-minute tape, they sell time in shorter blocks. Other than that, their time is tied up with rigidly-scheduled programming. The advantage with cable is that in addition to buying production services, the client can also buy access to an audience. For the past 25 years, most people have been excluded from that.

**CTR: Give us some specific examples of what you are doing in Portland.**

**RW:** We did a training tape for a psychologist who specializes in stress management. He wanted a tape that he could play for individual clients and prospective business clients as an introduction to his services. What we worked out was a beautiful barter arrangement. Instead of charging him, we asked him to come and speak to our Customer Service Representatives about stress. We taped that and gave him the finished product. We also played the tape on our LO channel. So, we got programming plus a free workshop. He got his tape, plus some city-wide exposure.

A project I am currently involved with is called BUBB: Bargaining Units Benefits Board. It's a program to assist state employees with the selection of an insurance carrier. During open enrollment time each year, several different carriers make their pitches to the state employees. The videotape presentations will save the companies time and money they now spend going out to talk with hundreds of state employees.

*Please turn to Page 30*





# What's Your PQ?

By Margie Nicholson

Producing a community television show is hard work. But, when it's done, don't those warm huzzahs from your viewers make it all worthwhile?

What? No warm huzzahs? Not a spark of response? Sounds like you've got "Low PQ.\*"

Here are some tips to boost your \*Promotion Quotient and assure that you will never forget that very important program element, the viewer.

Experienced community producers usually have a higher PQ than beginners because they have learned, through trial and error, two basic rules of program promotion.

First, **your visibility will increase in direct proportion to the length of time that your program has been running in a regular time slot.** Because the viewer learns how and when to find your program, word-of-mouth promotion has time to build, and any other promotional efforts that you undertake have a cumulative effect over time.

Second, **your viewership will increase in direct proportion to the number of people involved with your show.** Invite people to participate as crew, guests, members of your advisory board or speakers bureau. Have call-ins, contests, or a studio audience and be sure to have your camera people pan the crowd at all big events. Recruit people to host or attend community viewing parties. Keep all of your participants well-supplied with promotional literature and encourage them to spread the word.

## Designing The Program

Successful program promotion has to start with a good program. Start by developing a program title and concept that are easy to communicate and remember. Write yourself a slogan or description of a dozen words that you can squeeze into the TV listings or highlights section of your local newspaper or cable program guide.

Memorize it, and repeat it to anyone who asks what your show is all about.

Develop your program logo, slogan, set, music and all promotional materials so that they reinforce the show's title and concept. An artistic friend or art student may be able to help you. Once these elements are set, *don't change them*. It takes a great deal of creativity and repetition to have an impact in the midst of the daily advertising blitz that bombards every television viewer, so do not bore your audience with a vague, dull message or confuse them with changes.

Speaking of the audience, who are they? Is your "target" audience made up of swimmers, students, or Spanish-speaking seniors? Council members, chefs, or cat fanciers? Be as specific as possible in identifying your target audience when you plan your program and promotion, and then make your work appeal directly to them. Where do they live, shop and work? What media do they watch, listen to or read? Be sure you are placing your promotional materials where your viewers will see them.

Now that you have the basics, scan the lists of promotional ideas and techniques that follow. Go down the list, checking the techniques that would appeal to your target audience, suit the concept and style of your show, and fit your existing time, talent, and budget. Check at least 4 items on the A List, 3 on the B List, 2 on the C and 1 on the D. Put a due date and the initials of the person responsible next to each checked item.

Congratulations! You have just created a promotional plan, and your PQ will improve with every item you complete!. When you have accomplished them all, you will be well on the way to having your town's most famous access series. You can hear those Huzzahs already!

**THE "A" LIST: Your show should include:**

1. Famous or appealing talent.
2. Interesting, controversial or timely topic.
3. Memorable title and logo.

## Portland... continued

**CTR: What advice do you have for companies considering a relationship with local cable?**

**RW:** Learn to identify trends in the telecommunications industry while the doorway of opportunity is open. A cable operator is not going to want too much of any one thing on local origination, so it's important to be first.

Subscribe to a telecommunications magazine or trade journal. It will help you keep up with current trends, and foresee future ones which, as I said, are rooted in the Information Age concept. Pinpoint possible assets you can offer to the cable operator. You can probably save yourself some money without compromising the content and quality of your presentation.

Cable companies are maturing. The franchise wars are over and we've gotten

down to business. We now understand our own capabilities and limitations. We also understand the capabilities and limitations of other industrial production houses and broadcast facilities. I find that a lot of independent producers and agencies tend to be a little behind because they don't know how to utilize cable. I would encourage industrial users to go directly to the cable company.

*Richard Warner is Commercial Production and Local Origination Supervisor for Rogers Cable TV of Multnomah East in suburban Portland, Oregon.*

*Ellen Notbolm is Special Services Manager for Rogers Cable TV of Portland.*



4. Hummable or knock-their-socks-off music.
5. Special set or location.
6. Unique angle or viewpoint.
7. Date and time set well in advance.
8. Viewer involvement or participation.
9. Studio audience or on-location crowd.
10. Several cablecasts.

**Your word-of-mouth promotion should include:**

11. Tell everyone you know or meet.
12. Have your guests tell everyone.
13. Have your crew tell everyone.
14. Alert access and cable company staff.
15. Pan the crowd at all studio audience and on-location shoots. Tell them to watch and spread the word.
16. Ask experts and opinion leaders to act as your advisory board or focus group. Tell them to watch and spread the word.
17. Contact educators and have them tell students to watch as a class assignment.
18. Tell viewers to watch with their kids, parents, neighbors, or to call and alert their neighbors.
19. Organize viewing parties. Have ten people each invite ten people to their homes to watch.
20. Throw a party at some public place with a cable outlet and watch with the group.
21. Set up a Speakers Bureau or launch a public speaking campaign.
22. Call and ask a public relations pro for help.
23. Call and ask a critic to attend taping or review the show.
24. Call a reporter who covers your target area (health, city government...) and invite them to attend the taping, or appear as a guest, or review the show.
25. Ask your minister, priest or rabbi to spread the word.

**Your cable-related promotion should include:**

26. Create 30- and 60-second promos to run on the access channel.
27. See if you can also run them on other cable channels (MTV, CNN, ESPN etc.)
28. Appear as a guest on other shows to plug yours.
29. Run a message on the bulletin board channel.
30. Get a listing into the cable program guide.

31. Ask for, or buy, an ad in the guide.
32. Get together with other access producers and do a joint promotional campaign.
33. Put a sign in the cable office lobby.
34. Ask the sales staff to tell potential subscribers about the show.
35. Ask the installers to tell new subscribers.
36. Put a flyer in the new subscriber packet.
37. Put an announcement in or on the cable bill.
38. Put a sign or a bumper sticker on the cable trucks.

**THE "B" LIST:**

**Your print and press promotion should include:**

39. Announcements or ads to corporate and organizational newsletters and church bulletins.
40. Targeted distribution of posters,
41. ...Flyers,
42. ...Bill stuffers,
43. ...Postcards,
44. ...or Brochures.
45. A complete press kit.
46. Business cards with your logo.
47. Stationery with your logo.
48. Press releases at every step, from planning meeting,
49. ...to Grant received,
50. ...to Shooting on location,
51. ...to Premiere showing coming up,
52. ...to Host profile,
53. ...to Premiere coverage,
54. ...to Response to show,
55. ...to Awards won!
56. Have photos available for press.

**THE "C" LIST:**

**Your traditional media promotion should include:**

57. **Radio PSA's,**
58. ...News coverage,
59. ...Editorials (write and submit),
60. ...Advertising (buy your own or ask a local business to let you piggyback on theirs),
61. ...Talk show appearances,
62. ...Reviews.
63. **Television PSA's,**
64. ...News coverage,
65. ...Editorials,
66. ...Advertising,
67. ...Talk show appearances,
68. ...Reviews.
69. **Newspapers** (daily, weekly, special interest, shoppers' guides) display or classified ads,

70. ...Mention in a column,
71. ...Editorial,
72. ...Review,
73. ...Feature,
74. ...News coverage,
75. ...TV listings,
76. ...TV highlights list.
77. **Direct Mail** to target groups,
78. ...Zip code areas,
79. ...Organizational mailing lists,
80. ...Access members, users, and supporters,
81. ...Cable subscribers.
82. **Billboards** (your own or run on a business' board.)

**THE "D" LIST:**

**Your premium promotion should include:**

83. T shirts.
84. Buttons.
85. Bumper stickers.
86. Pins.
87. Pens.
88. Notepads.
89. Bookmarks.
90. Calendars (with day and time of your show written in).
91. Balloons.
92. Paper visors.
93. Keychains.

**Your miscellaneous promotion should include:**

94. Signs in or on bus stops and buses.
95. Supermarket bulleting boards, sacks, receipts.
96. Library bulletin boards.
97. Your answering machine.
98. A neighborhood festival booth.
99. A Parade float.
100. Banner on the access center building.
101. Logo on the back of a white balance card.
102. Tape played in store windows.
103. Notice on the local computer hacker bulleting board.
104. A sign on your car, van or truck.
105. A sandwich board when you shoot.

---

*Margie Nicholson is Director of Operations for the Chicago Access Corporation.*



# WHERE SILICON MEETS VIDICON

## The Computer Finds A Happy Home In Access

By Richard Lovett

— In Aspen, Colorado, a home-brew character generator built around a micro-computer gives viewers in the famous ski resort up-to-the-minute news on ski conditions, arts and entertainment, and even flight conditions.

— In Columbus, Ohio, viewers are enjoying eye-popping, microcomputer-generated animation on some of the titling and station ID's on the local access channels.

— In Indianapolis, a Commodore 64 created attractive studio cards using a graphics program and a dot-matrix printer.

— In Tucson, access users have developed sophisticated equipment checkout, studio use and program scheduling software for their computer and are thinking of marketing it.

Without doubt, computers are thriving in access. As recently as four or five years ago they were hardly mentioned at NFLCP gatherings — not surprising when you consider that the first practical micro-computers were produced only a decade ago. Their prominence in access now is evidenced by the fact that much of one track at the 1986 NFLCP National Conference was devoted to microcomputers.

Computer uses in access tend to fall into two categories. The first is in the production process, where the computer's video output is recorded on videotape or cablecast directly. The second is in management; doing scheduling, bookkeeping and word processing. Often in access, the same computer does both.

Moreover, many access programmers have proven unwilling to wait for computer hardware and software that will do what they want it to. In numerous cases, they have created their own machines and written their own software.

One such person is Drew Shaffer, cable officer for the City of Iowa City. As of late summer, Shaffer was preparing to go on-line with a sophisticated talking character generator that viewers can command from their home telephones. Shaffer and a team of seven assembled the system, largely on their own time, and are now thinking about selling it.

The system operates using a Commodore *Amiga* computer and contains hundreds of pages of information — city budget facts, bus schedules, details of recreation services and even the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List. Graphics, generated by a camera or a computer graphics tablet may also be displayed. The computer can speak all text using voice synthesis.

Viewers can determine what is displayed by pressing keys on their touch-tone phones. Each call is logged and a record made of the information the viewer selects. The record enables Shaffer and his staff to adjust the programming according to the interests of the audience.

The system will run on the Iowa City municipal channel first, then probably on other access channels. Shaffer is already sure the setup will be a hit. At an NFLCP regional conference last spring, he demonstrated the system on the channel around midnight. "We got phone call after phone call starting ten to fifteen seconds after we turned it on," he said. "We couldn't believe it." There had been no advance publicity.

The Iowa City system has been three years in the making. In the process, the development group tested and abandoned three other computers (Apple, IBM and AT&T). The seven wrote their own software in *BASIC* and *C*, two popular computer languages.

Another direct-display system, operating on Apple *Ile* and *II-Plus* computers, has been running on Manhattan Cable in New York City since early 1982. (It went off the air in midsummer for a changeover to an *Amiga*.) Known as "AppleBytes," the project was started by the Alternate Media Center at New York University.

Joel Landy, who helps run AppleBytes, describes it as "a fifteen-minute program consisting of frames of computer-generated graphics and text." Each program consists of several "stories." AppleBytes uses a readily available computer program, *Complete Graphics System*, for text and graphics capability. *Ed-U-Paint*, a second commercial program, allows story creators to draw on the screen. AppleBytes

also uses original software written by David Harkins, one of the project's original creators.

A "story" consists of numerous frames, or screens, of information stored on a hard disk. The operator tells the computer how long, and in what sequence, to display each screen.

The information includes community services, events calendars and editorials. Community groups are invited to participate in submitting content.

A computer-generated character generator system in Aspen, Colorado has been running even longer — about seven years, according to Nick DeWolf, one of its three creators. DeWolf, described by friends as Aspen's computer guru, applied his talents to the project because the community channels on Aspen's Canyon Cable Company needed a character generator but lacked the \$6,000 to buy what the users wanted.

DeWolf built a CG practically from scratch using a Digital Group computer and assorted components from various sources. The machine displays only six screens of information, but that is largely by design. DeWolf and others believe the pages should recycle every six minutes or less to encourage viewership. Otherwise, "a bulletin board on a TV set has the same problem as one at the YMCA," DeWolf says. "It quickly clutters up."

To ensure that the content is fresh and pertinent, computer terminals were installed at the local police station, City Hall, the arts foundation office, airport, cable company and skiing headquarters. Using a password, each agency has access to one screen and tends to keep it updated daily. The easy access allows agencies to notify residents quickly when the airport is socked in, a community picnic has been rained out or if there is an important safety announcement.

DeWolf's system was the inspiration for Steve Cosgrove, a computer graphics consultant who created an IBM PC-based system for the Chicago Access Corporation. CAC gave the system its own channel and dubbed it "FYI Chicago."



Cosgrove describes "FYI" as a "computer-generated slide show" featuring images that are more akin to video still-frames than computer graphics.

A video camera and digitizer capture a full-color picture from any source, and the operator can then overlay it with text. Other software allows freehand art to be mixed in. CAC solicits announcements and bulletins from municipal and non-profit groups and turns them into scripts using volunteer writers. Then artists at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago turn the scripts into "stories" of ten to thirty images each, arranged slide-show fashion. Taken together, the stories form a thirty- to sixty-minute edition of "FYI Chicago" that runs 24 hours daily. The system cost CAC about \$20,000.

Animation is the specialty at the Columbus (Ohio) Cable Access Corporation, where an Amiga computer is being used to liven up station ID's and titles. Until recently, the computer images — jellybeans jumping out of an Easter egg, for example — were given motion through conventional videotape editing. But the access center recently acquired software called *Aegis* that contains true animation capability. Its possibilities appear unlimited, said executive assistant Karen Helmersen, an experienced graphics illustrator who creates drawings on the Amiga using a "mouse" input device.

Lacking a way at present to genlock the Amiga, the Columbus users capture the images by aiming a studio camera at the monitor. "The resolution isn't as good, but it's still effective," Ms. Helmersen said. The Amiga system cost about \$2,000, which she considers cheap.

Not all systems cost even that much. The Bloomington (Minnesota) Video Center uses a Commodore 64 for a character generator on its municipal and public access channels. A plug-in software car-

tridge from JDK Images, a local company, allows the computer to display up to 26 screens of text and graphics with a variety of effects. Screens can be stored on floppy disks for retrieval. (An earlier version of the software will run on Commodore's VIC-20 computer.)

The software sells for \$225, making the entire system cost a total of around \$600.

Not all access uses of computers are for producing images. In Kansas City, Missouri, the Public Information Office at City Hall generates its municipal channel TV schedules on an IBM PC. The same software, written in compiled BASIC, prints out log sheets used to program a Phasecom automated videotape player. The software allows up to fifteen schedules and up to 31 lists of programs to be entered and stored on disk. Then a staff member has only to match up a schedule and program list in order to generate neatly typed schedules suitable for reproduction, as well as log sheets for one or more days. The software is now being sold.

A more elaborate scheduling program was developed by the Tucson (Arizona) Community Cable Corporation. "We had a need to do lots of different kinds of scheduling, including reserving eight portapaks, six editing suites, studios, a mobile van, and programming on two channels," said Sam Behrend, operations director.

"We found that the facilitators were spending all their time checking out things, and had very little time left to work with our users."

A local programmer, Dan Parslow, solved the problem by writing a software application for the popular *dBase III-Plus* database program. Parslow's application allows a user to be tracked from the start of her or his program until it is scheduled for cablecast.

"A member who wants to do a project will meet with the access facilitator and

discuss it," Behrend explained. "But instead of scheduling the facilities or equipment, the staff member writes a prescription good for so many equipment checkouts, so many studio sessions, and so on. The producer can then take that prescription to one of the secretaries."

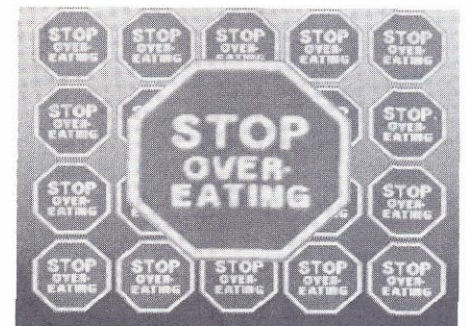
The secretary opens an account for the user and enters credits into the computer for the agreed-upon resources. Each time something is scheduled or checked out, the account is debited. When the account is exhausted, the facilitator can find out how the production is going and whether more resources are needed.

The computer also schedules the show for cablecast, creates a catalog entry so users can know what is in the access center library, records data about the show's air dates and length, generates a cassette label, and produces a periodic report to the city and cable company.

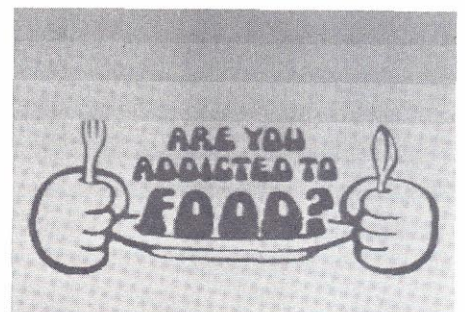
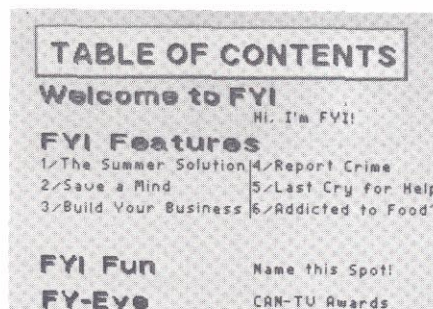
The access center, like many others, also uses its computer for accounting, spreadsheets and word processing.

Finally, at Indianapolis' American Cablevision, an IBM XT is in use for similar clerical chores, but internal operations supervisor Tim Renshaw reports that he uses a Commodore 64, with a dot-matrix

*Please turn to Page 34.*



*A track "slide" from FYI story.*





# Essay:

## Access Challenges The Structure of Television

By Fred Johnson

Development of cable access is an important vehicle that can be used to help ensure that a greater diversity of information will be made available to all citizens. Fortunately, in recent years most cable franchises have made provisions for public access to cable. These franchises have required the availability of television channels, equipment and facilities for public use at little or no charge. This represents an unprecedented departure from the "money determines content" rule that has always plagued the mass media. For the first time, the public can be engaged in affordable production and distribution of electronic media.

It is easy to lose sight of the significance of this phenomenon when so many utopian promises have been made and broken in the name of cable television. Still, the coaxial cable remains the highest-capacity information conduit that comes into our homes; and that cable brings us television — the most powerful system of communi-

cation ever devised. Cable access is at the center of a highly significant new medium.

### The Social Significance Of Access

Although access is made possible by technological change, its significance is not so much technical as social. Access offers a highly innovative editorial policy. It offers inexpensive, non-discriminatory, first-come, first-served use of a medium that enters the home of every cable subscriber in town. Public access gives new meaning to the First Amendment of the Constitution by providing the technical capacity for all of us to speak to our communities.

Most changes in mass media have been changes in degree, rather than changes in structure. The "top down" structure of mass media, in which a powerful few communicate to a passive majority, has remained virtually unchanged over the

years. Advances in technology have done little more than allow media companies in control to communicate with greater clarity, across greater distances, and to larger numbers of people. The more recent developments in communications technology — videocassette recorders, video-discs, multi-point distribution service, and cable — may appear to afford the viewer greater freedom, since viewers receiving these services have more control over what they watch and when. However, these new tools do not represent a change in structure because the programming, and the programmers, are still the same.

Public access turns the "top down" structure of the media industry upside-down. Public access provides an opportunity to challenge the concept of passive television viewing. It encourages all citizens to communicate with their neighbors, and it is aimed at creating a community forum for the expression of *any* idea or issue. It is a medium used by artists, human service

## Silicon Meets Vidicon... *continued*

printer and an inexpensive graphics program called *Print Shop* in an additional way — to produce studio art cards.

"With this, you can create very nice art cards with a variety of fonts," Renshaw said. "If you wish to create a card for a matte key, you may use the option to print white characters on a black background. With a little smooth camera work, you can create some nifty additions to your CG work."

Not content to just use computers, Renshaw and a local computer club produce a weekly access program, "Micro Magazine," to discuss them.

### The Future

Such diversity of computer uses, many of them requiring considerable technical

knowledge, raises a question: What is the future of microcomputers in a medium heavily dependent on volunteers and amateurs? Steve Israelsky of Arlington (Virginia) Community Television, who is helping to assemble an educational packet on computers for the NFLCP, thinks staff specialization will be the key.

"There is so much learning involved," he said. "For computers to be really used, I think you have to have a specialist, just like you have a video specialist. . . Unless you have that capability on your staff, you're just not going to get a whole lot out of it."

But for now, access programmers are doing what they have always done — plunging in, experimenting, innovating, pushing back the frontiers, becoming their

own experts. If the brief history of access is any indication, a little thing like technical know-how won't slow them down for long.

*Richard Lovett is Director of Public Information for the City of Kansas City, Missouri.*



organizations, schools, local businesses, unions, churches, public interest groups and community organizations, and just plain folks.

## Media Literacy

Present-day television is not just a system for transmitting messages. Television is a system of enculturation working cradle-to-grave to legitimize the current social order, and much of its power stems from the fact that the public knows nothing of this process — we only experience it passively as viewers. In today's information environment, media literacy is essential to the critical thinking of a well-educated individual. Media literacy is only possible if a person knows how to create, as well as watch, audio-visual communication.

Cable access is the only institution that provides the opportunity to create that communication in a non-discriminatory way. By giving people an opportunity to actively make television, cable access fosters the kind of media literacy necessary to living and thinking critically in a media-saturated environment.

## The Access Audience

Many people have said that "no one watches public access." Cable operators say it, but representatives of the cable industry are constantly lobbying governments to strike out access requirements from local franchises. Others who say it are those who expect access programming to generate audiences comparable to broadcasting, something it was never intended to do.

Cable is a hybrid technology when it comes to audience development and regulation. It is something like broadcasting, something like a newspaper, and something like a common carrier. The audience for an access channel is, by definition, a more narrow audience — but it is a quality audience and an involved one.

The passive audience concept in mass media has obscured the fact that audiences must be created; that building an audience is an active process of education and trust. No one was watching broadcast television until the networks developed the audience. Similarly, access producers are creating audiences all over the country. Each week they produce over 10,000 hours of new

programming, and they have created a significant viewership.

## Regulation

Because it is important, because it empowers people to communicate, public access is not without problems. In previous periods of technological development, predictions of the democratic, decentralizing potential of new technologies were made by their developers just as they are being made today (the cable industry's recent ad campaign, "It's not just more choice, it's YOUR choice" is a case in point). In spite of those predictions, the overall impact of technology has been to contribute to the concentration and centralization of wealth and power in the hands of fewer and fewer media conglomerates.

Those same centralizing forces are now at work in cable. The cable operators are successfully lobbying municipal governments to be released from their promises to provide access. Perhaps worse (because it comes from within access ranks), many access managers don't understand that public access is provided to enhance free speech and are settling for access policies and structures that limit the potential of access to empower.

For example, some local governments are considering regulations that unnecessarily restrict the content of access programs, or are selectively enforcing franchise requirements for access so that politically unpopular groups are inhibited from using the system. In some cases such policies could be in violation of these groups' constitutional rights, but if the policies go unchallenged their legality will never be determined.

Ultimately, the democratic ideal of access depends on the involvement of people with democratic intentions. There is nothing inherently liberating about communications technology unless people create policies to make it so. The process of doing that is teaching us much about the democratic structuring of all communications systems.

Cable access represents a technical and regulatory communications structure with great potential for social change. Although access has been around for more than fifteen years and has made astonishing gains, it is now operating in a regulatory climate that is less than two years old. There has never been a more critical time for people with a keen sense of social justice, and organizing skills, to become involved in access.

## Classified

### Project Director

Project Director for non-commercial TV project in Watsonville/Salinas/Santa Cruz, CA. Generate participation and support from local community groups, develop plans for programming, equipment and fundraising. No media experience necessary — looking for organizers and others committed to social change. Contact: Arlene Kimata, California Community TV Network, 3852 M.L. King, Jr. Way, Oakland, CA 94609; (415) 547-7699.

### Black Life Programming

Looking for Black life programming? Write for descriptive list. Write: S.C. Watkins Co.  
Box 2532  
Reston, VA 22090

### Do You Value Your Opinion?

The CTR Editorial Board is in need of 6

individuals with a broad range of experience in the field of community programming. Applications are being accepted to fill 3 one-year appointments and 3 two-year appointments to this prestigious body. If you have a thorough knowledge of community programming from operational, historical, and philosophical perspectives; specialized knowledge in at least one specific area of communications; and prior service in an editorial capacity, then the CTR Editorial Board is certainly interested in you. The CTR Editorial Board meets twice each year to select themes for the quarterly issues, suggest articles, recommend authors, and review each issue. Editorial Board members must be able to travel to each meeting, and to dedicate the time necessary to maintain the high standards of quality of CTR. For an application, reply to:

NFLCP  
906 Pennsylvania Ave., SE  
Washington, D.C. 20003  
(202) 544-7272



# NFLCP Honors Hometown Winners

*Hometown USA  
Video Festival  
Winner*

The 1986 Hometown USA Video Festival winners were spotlighted during the NFLCP awards banquet at the National Conference in San Francisco. Gerrow Brill of Fuji Photo Film USA, which also helped sponsor the festival, Robert Schulman of The Learning Channel, and Peggy Ziegler of *Multichannel News* presented the palques to 62 winners, as the audience viewed an excellent showcase of the winning programs which exemplified the spirit and flavor of community television. *Community Television Review* honors, once again, the producers of this year's winning Hometown USA Video Festival videotapes:

## Overall Excellence in L.O.

Cablevision of Brookline  
"EXCELLENCE IN L.O."  
Brookline, MA

## Overall Excellence in Public Access

Cupertino Community TV  
"GET THE PICTURE"  
Cupertino, CA

## Overall Excellence in Institutional Access

Multnomah Cable Access  
"SAMPLER"  
Gresham, OR

## Access Program Promotion

Miami Valley Cable Council  
"SOUTHSIDE VIDEO PROMOTIONAL SPOTS"  
Kettering, OH

## Documentary Event:

*Media Professional*  
Sue Marsh and F. Barge  
"RATTLESNAKES AND REUNIONS"  
Decatur, GA

*Community Producer*  
Robert W. Mull  
"SOMETHING TO WIN THE WAR"  
Yakima, WA

## Documentary Profile:

*Media Professional*  
David Harrienger, Jr.  
"IN THE DUST OF DREAMS"  
Austin, TX

## Community Producer

Barbara Neal  
"BOTH SIDES OF THE STREET"  
San Francisco, CA

## Documentary Public Awareness:

*Media Professional*  
Johnny Tavaras and Sue Ellison  
"LETTA'S FAMILY"  
New York, NY  
Michael Cabana  
"I WON'T BE BACK"  
Springfield, MA

## Community Producer

Jim Dessauer and R. Smith  
"WITNESS FOR PEACE"  
Syracuse, NY

## Educational Programming:

*Media Professional—Single*  
John Smealli  
"I GIOVANNI SOLISTI"  
West Hartford, CT

*Community Producer—Single*  
Eric Mueller  
"GBS VIDEOS"  
Glenview, IL

*Media Professional—Series*  
Alida Thacher  
"WHAT DID YOU DO IN SCHOOL TODAY?"  
Gresham, OR

## Entertainment:

*Media Professional—Single*  
James Cuniff  
"EXPERIMENTAL DOG PARK"  
Berkeley, CA

*Community Producer—Single*  
Scott Haller  
"TOO DARN HOT"  
Brighton, MA

*Media Professional—Series*  
Paul Wahlstrom  
"LIFE GOES ON"  
Irving, TX

*Community Producer—Series*  
Lou Panarale  
"ARTS ETCETERA"  
Alexandria, VA

## Ethnic Expression:

*Media Professional—Single*  
George Mitchell  
"LAWRENCE ELLER AND FRIENDS"  
Decatur, GA

*Community Producer—Single*  
Guy Phillips  
"A NEW YEAR FOR THE MIEN"  
Seattle, WA

## Informational Programming:

*Media Professional—Single*  
Gae Rusk  
"ALONE TOGETHER"  
Honolulu, HI

*Community Producer—Single*  
Trish Newfarmer  
"THE WINCHESTER HOUSE"  
San Jose, CA

*Media Professional—Series*  
Alan Wolper  
"RIGHT TO KNOW"  
Avenell, NJ

*Community Producer—Series*  
Frank Morrow  
"INSIDE ALTERNATIVE VIEWS"  
Austin, TX



**Innovative Uses of Cable:***Media Professional—Single*Eric Bicker-Nicks  
"VIDEO SHORTS"

Norwood, MA

*Community Producer—Single*Joseph Boudreaux, Denise Webb, &  
Dorothy Richmond

"DOCUMENTALLY YOURS"

Tucson, AZ

*Media Professional—Series*

Susan Stone Shapiro

"VIDEO SPECTRUM"

New York, NY

**Interactive Programming:***Media Professional—Single*

Michael Betz

"ELECTION '85"

Kalamazoo, MI

*Community Producer—Single*

Dawn Lane

"TRIATHLON: THE ULTIMATE  
CHALLENGE"

San Marcos, CA

*Media Professional—Series*

Alan Hayden and Brad Stensburg

"UNIVERSITY OF DENVER  
SPORTS"

Englewood, CO

**Video Art:***Media Professional—Single*

David Kerr

"BLACK/WHITE JOKES"

Seattle, WA

*Community Producer—Single*

Ben Goetzman

"PROGRAMMED ILLUSION"

Cincinnati, OH

**Instructional/Training:***Media Professional—Single*

Peter Sears

"EMERGENCY CALL 911"

Arlington, VA

*Community Producer—Single*

Candace Woods

"LET'S MIX IT UP"

Greenhills, OH

**International:***Community Producer—Single*

Chris Sharp

"MILLIONS CRANES PROJECT"

Kirkland, WA

*Community Producer—Series*

Louis Perego

"INTERNATIONAL MUSIC  
VIDEOS"

New York, NY

**Live Programming:***Media Professional—Single*

Justine Giannetti

"WHAT'S OUR FUTURE?"

Cleveland Heights, OH

*Community Producer—Single*

Paul Guignan and M. Spalding

"THE FRIDAY CLUB"

Evanston, IL

*Community Producer—Series*

Tod W. Schwenk

"CRYSTAL MIRAGE"

San Leandro, CA

**Local News:***Media Professional*

Andree Hight

"CABLEVISION NEWS 12"

Norwalk, CT

*Community Producer*

Edward Royce and J. West

"AROUND AND ABOUT ORANGE  
COUNTY"

Santa Ana, CA

**L.O. Program Promotion:**

Sal Martino and W. McCarthy

"WHERE'S THE BINGO?"

Springfield, MA

**Magazine Format:***Media Professional*

Elizabeth Gilmore

"HORIZON"

Denver, CO

*Community Producer*

Victoria Hall and D. Richardson

"WE ARE THE CITY"

Jamaica Plains, MA

**Municipal Programming:***Media Professional—Single*

Sandra Holden

"BURNING WASTE"

Long Beach, CA

*Media Professional—Series*

Mary Nordstrum

"THE JOB SHOW"

Columbus, OH

**Music Video:**

Mike Trinklein

"MAKING YOUR DREAMS COME  
ALIVE"

Pocatello, ID

*Community Producer*

Carl Slanton

"PEOPLE I COULD HAVE BEEN"

Tucson, AZ

**Performing Arts:***Media Professional—Single*

Justine Giannetti

"THE OHIO BALLET LIVE"

Cleveland, OH

*Community Producer—Single*

Dan Klover

"HAND ART: MUSIC IN YOUR  
HANDS"

Portland, OR

*Community Producer—Series*

Linda Lewett

"METRO DANCE/ARTS"

Fairfax, VA

**Programming by Youth:**

David Allyn

"WHAT ARE YOU SCARED OF?"

Mound, MN

**Programming for Youth:***Media Professional—Single*

Hubert Jessup

"THE DRUG DILEMMA"

Boston, MA

*Community Producer—Single*

Marc Dewalle

"CHS: AN INTRODUCTION"

Chelmsford, MA

*Media Professional—Series*

Sandra Holden

"BOOK GALAXY"

Long Beach, CA

*Community Producer—Series*

Bill Crawford

"THE JOE SHOW"

Austin, TX

**Public Service Announcements:***Media Professional*

Lisa Crafts

"SHOUT"

New York, NY

*Community Producer*

Forbes H. Mercy

"CHRISTMAS FIRE SAFETY"

Yakima, WA



## Cable Consciousness – Raising For The Judiciary

By Brenton A. Bleier

These last several years have been difficult ones for the local regulation of cable television.

Ever since the enactment of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984, local governments have been set upon by a wave of "Constitutional" judicial attacks upon the franchising process and local government regulation itself.

To those directly involved with local cable television problems, the most notable thing about these constitutional challenges is the small resemblance their portrayals of local regulation have to reality. Local cable regulators and programmers have found franchise fees and public access support termed "giveaways," "bribes" and "extortion." More amazing yet, an industry which seldom ventures from the retransmission of movies and

tired sitcoms is being portrayed as filled with fearless, editorializing journalists, bravely yearning to be free of the heavy hand of local regulations. Those familiar with the reality of cable television as an industry driven by the desire for quick and continued profits could only smile at such depictions.

But these smiles began to be replaced by panic when we saw judges treating such phantasmagorical portrayals as fact. Would no one see cable for what it is, a virtually unregulated, natural monopoly? Would no one see the damage to the sensitive environment of the public rights-of-way in a mad land rush, a race for the market in an environment devoid of appropriate franchise regulation?

There came a time in the summer of 1985 with the Ninth Circuit Court of

Appeals decision in *City of Los Angeles, et al. v. Preferred Communications, Inc.* when it appeared that all would be lost for the diversity of access bred by the competitive franchising process. The Ninth Circuit decision swallowed the stilted cant of Preferred Communications' lawyers almost whole.

Seemingly oblivious to the dangerous intentions of these occupants of the public rights of way, the Ninth Circuit decision adopted virtually *in toto* the language and tone and even spirit of the vicious industry attacks upon local regulation.

But the summer of 1986 brought a change. And what a change!

### Recent Decisions

The summer began with an opinion from the United States Supreme Court on

## NFLCP Honors Hometown Winners... Continued

### Religious Programming:

*Community Producer—Single*  
Nanda Rao

"UPANAYANA: THE THREAD CEREMONY"

Grand Rapids, MI

*Media Professional—Series*

William Winslow

"CHOICE OF CHANGE"

New York, NY

*Community Producer—Series*

Ron Priggee

"YOUTH VIEW"

Plymouth, MI

### Sports:

*Media Professional—Single*

Patricia Bordeleau

"VINNY PAZIENZA: THE HOMECOMING"

Cranston, RI



Community producer Nanda Rao shows her happiness about winning a Hometown USA Video Festival award for her program "Upanayana: The Thread Ceremony," as Steve Israelsky prepares to present another award.



an appeal from the Ninth Circuit *Preferred* decision. The near thunderstruck cities could only fear the worst. It began to appear that cable television had grown to be an investment opportunity of gigantic proportions and yet the judiciary knew precious little of its characteristics.

It was in this circumstance that the Supreme Court breathed the first breath of fresh air and judicial realism into the world of cable television law. The Supreme Court sustained the technical holding of the Ninth Circuit decision on narrow procedural grounds. More important, however, the Supreme Court, both in the Court's opinion and in a separate concurring opinion by three of the justices, held unanimously that the court could not formulate the applicable standard for regulation of cable television until it had many more facts relating to the nature of the demand for the industry's product and the affect of the remedies proposed by the industry upon the environmentally-sensitive rights-of-way.

The industry lawyers and their house organs strove mightily to define as a victory the Supreme Court's judicious retreat from the impetuosity of the Ninth Circuit decision in *Preferred*.

But the full impact of the Supreme Court's decision could only be seen several months later when, in August, the Ninth Circuit handed down its published opinion in *Pacific West Cable Company v. City of Sacramento*. Pacific West, a sister plaintiff for *Preferred*, represented by the same industry law firm (Farrow, Schildhause, Wilson & Rains) and counting on the same doctrines and argument, had renewed a request for a preliminary injunction originally filed in the industry's halcyon days immediately following the Ninth Circuit decision in *Preferred*.

Basing its renewed arguments largely on the Ninth Circuit *Preferred* decision, Pacific West urged nothing less than immediate unrestricted access to the public rights-of-way—in other words, the right to build a cable system without going through the franchising process. Appealing to the same Ninth Circuit from a denial of that injunction issued by the trial court, Pacific West had to be stunned by the decision it received from the Ninth Circuit; not only were more facts necessary, but the Ninth Circuit Court went further and found affirmatively that Pacific West had *no* unrestricted right to enter Sacramento's public rights-of-way.

Moreover, far from finding which requirements in the highly sophisticated Sacramento franchising process met an as-

yet-undefined constitutional standard, the court went further and opined that it "could not do so in the abstract." This of course is precisely what the industry approach in cases such as *Preferred* and *Pacific West* had attempted to do: provoke the courts into establishing a theoretical standard bearing no relationship to the reality of cable television. In short, the industry would encourage the courts not to be confused by facts. Not only did the *Preferred* court prefer to have the facts, the *Pacific West* court mandated careful factual consideration of each purported restraint of cable operators' freedom.

But August would yet deliver the *coup de grace* to the industry's fantasy view. On August 26, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis, Missouri handed down its opinion in *Central Telecommunications, Inc. v. TCI Cablevision, Inc.* Because of an unusual factual situation involving the two cable companies, this case had positive implications for cities both in terms of initial franchising and renewal difficulties.

In *Central Telecommunications*, an existing franchise had been acquired and run by the industry giant, TCI. Approaching the time for renewal, the city issued an RFP and, ultimately, a new franchise to a new small entity (Central).

Immediately, TCI set upon a course of outrageous actions which the court sets out in full in its opinion, including pressuring local officials, threatening elderly citizens with the cutoff of their cable television service, even impliedly threatening the lives and careers of employees and consultants of the new company.

When Central brought suit on anti-trust grounds against TCI, TCI raised First Amendment arguments as asserted in the *Pacific West* and *Preferred* cases, that is, that the city had the option of letting in additional providers, but that TCI had a constitutional right to continue without interference. TCI suffered a \$36 Million judgment in the trial court, and appealed to the Eighth Circuit.

There is an old dictum that "bad facts make bad law." But *Central Telecommunications* turned that maxim upon its head. At least in this case, bad facts resulted in excellent law. Not only did the Eighth Circuit Court affirm the anti-trust judgment against TCI, finding outrageous, anti-competitive conduct, but the court also proceeded to devote eight pages of its opinion to a discussion of the purported First Amendment claims of TCI.

In the course of the discussion, the court fully ratified the finding of the trial court

that cable television, in the present state of technology, had been shown to be a natural monopoly. The fact that cable is a natural monopoly, said the court, means that the only effective competition which can occur is franchising competition *for* the market, not *in* the market. This is exactly the reverse of the claim made by the attorneys for Pacific West and *Preferred*.

As one reads the brilliant decision of Judge Heaney in *Central Telecommunications*, we can sense the growing judicial consciousness in this country of exactly what cable television is; a natural monopoly, operating courtesy of the Congress in a virtually unregulated atmosphere, but occupying environmentally-sensitive public rights-of-way.

These decisions; the Supreme Court's in *Preferred*, the Ninth Circuit's in *Pacific West*, and the Eighth Circuit's in *Central Telecommunications*, give confidence to local regulators everywhere that the fantasy island view of cable television offered to courts across this land by segments of the industry is no longer fooling anyone.

---

*Brenton A. Bleier is a practicing attorney in Sacramento, California emphasizing the representation of local governments in cable television matters.*





# NFLCP Membership — Your ticket to the Community Television Review

## NEW MEMBER ENROLLMENT FORM

### INDIVIDUAL:

\_\_\_\_\_ Community Associate/  
Student (\$35)

\_\_\_\_\_ Professional (\$50)

### ORGANIZATION:

\_\_\_\_\_ Non-profit organization  
(\$90)

\_\_\_\_\_ Educational Institution  
(\$90)

### Government Entities:

### Population Size:

\_\_\_\_\_ Under 100,000 (\$100)

\_\_\_\_\_ 100,000-500,000 (\$150)

\_\_\_\_\_ Over 500,000 (\$200)

\_\_\_\_\_ Patron (\$100)

\_\_\_\_\_ charter Life (\$500)

\_\_\_\_\_ Library (\$75)

\_\_\_\_\_ For-profit organization  
(\$150)

Cable System or MSO:

No. of Subscribers:

\_\_\_\_\_ Under 10,000 (\$150)

\_\_\_\_\_ 10,000-50,000 (\$400)

\_\_\_\_\_ Over 50,000 (\$600)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(or Organization) (Please Print)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_  
(Organizational Members Only)

("Government Entities"  
includes municipalities, states,  
counties and cable  
commissions.)

("Cable System/MSO" includes  
cable company-operated  
access and local origination  
facilities.)

Make your check/money order payable to: NFLCP  
Mail to: National Federation of Local Cable Programmers  
906 Pennsylvania Avenue SE  
Washington, D.C. 20003



Community Television Review  
NFLCP  
906 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20003



ATTN: ROBERT MUHLBACK  
MSU  
INSTRUCTIONAL & PUBLIC TV  
EAST LANSING MI 48824  
8605/GEA/CS